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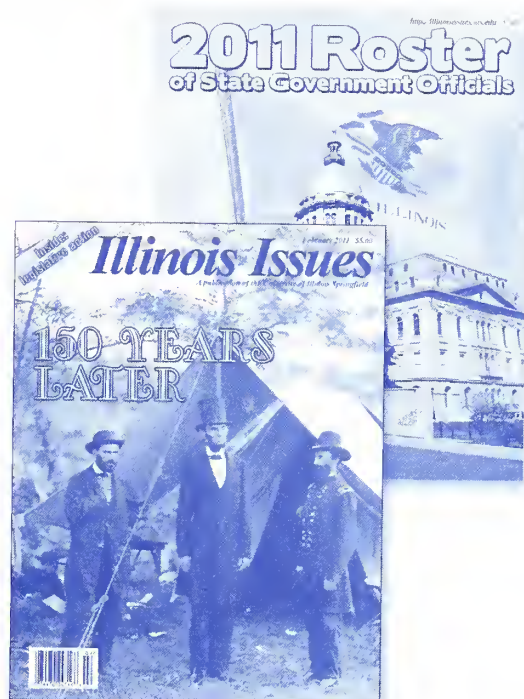
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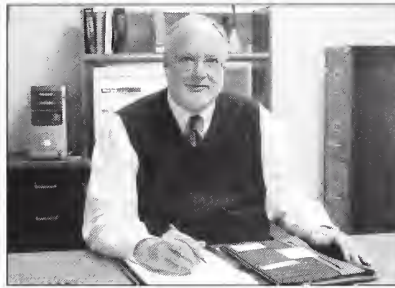
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Dana Heupel



Redistricting process needs transparency

by Dana Heupel

It's as certain as the sunrise that every 10 years, both parties in the Illinois General Assembly will use every tool at their disposal to try to gain any advantage in scribing new district maps for state lawmakers and U.S. representatives.

This year, for the first time since the 1970 Constitution was enacted, Democrats can single-handedly chart the political waters for the next 10 years because they control the Illinois House, Senate and governor's office.

Republicans and reformers have tried but mostly failed in their efforts to modify the redistricting process that will happen later this year, after detailed U.S. Census figures are released. Now, the most they can hope for is that it will be transparent — that the public will have some say in laying the lines that will affect who represents them in the legislature and Congress for the next decade.

Unfortunately, though, they will have to rely on the good will, such as it is, of Democratic House Speaker Michael Madigan and Democratic Senate President John Cullerton to

ensure transparency because public involvement isn't clearly defined in recent legislation concerning redistricting.

In the waning days of the last General Assembly's two-year session, lawmakers passed **Senate Bill 3976**, which sets out two procedures for dealing with the legislative remapping process.

The first would allow mapmakers to create districts that concentrate racial or language minorities to allow them more say in who represents them. The second would mandate at least four public hearings in separate geographic areas of the state to gather testimony from the public before the new maps are drawn. As of this writing, the bill rests with Gov. Pat Quinn, awaiting his signature or veto.

The provision to ensure minority representation isn't highly controversial: Democratic lawmakers and redistricting reform groups generally support it, as do some Republicans, especially those in the Senate. But the transparency provision is another matter, with reformers

and Republicans howling that it doesn't guarantee more hearings than four, and that it doesn't provide for public input after the maps are drawn but before they are approved.

The sponsors of the legislation, Sen. Kwame Raoul and Rep. Barbara Flynn Currie, both Democrats from Chicago, have tried to calm the critics by repeating the mantra that four hearings are only the minimum set out in **SB 3976**.

"It's not a ceiling at all," Raoul said after the bill passed both legislative chambers. "I think, inevitably, we'll have more than four hearings because any legislative remap plan is legislation and will go through the hearing process of the legislature. But it will do so after having had at least four hearings in different parts of the state."

Currie went further: "This is definitely a floor," she said during debate in the House. "Ten years ago, there were at least 20 such hearings, and I anticipate that this year, the number would likely be at least as large."

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The sponsors also said “regular, everyday people,” as Raoul called them, will be able to suggest their own district maps.

“Ten years ago,” Currie said, “there was the opportunity for the citizens of the state to come to a central location, use a computer with census data in it — we supplied the software — so ordinary citizens would have an opportunity to draw a map and share that map with members of the legislature. ... I’d be very surprised if we didn’t offer even more opportunities for the citizens to participate directly in the drawing of the representative and senatorial districts.”

Raoul and Currie both dodged questions, though, about allowing public comment after the maps are drawn. And both complained that many of the critics of **SB 3976** had voted against or opposed earlier legislation that called for more public hearings.

SB 3976 is actually the third iteration of legislation intended to modify the redistricting process this time around.

The first was the proposed “Fair Map Amendment” to the state Constitution, pushed by a coalition led by the League of Women Voters. It grew out of recommendations from the Illinois Reform Commission, which Quinn created soon after he became governor.

Among other things, the Fair Map Amendment called for an independent commission to draw the new district maps without favoring either party. It was backed by Republicans and supported by reform groups but failed to emerge from House and Senate committees last spring. Advocates also couldn’t collect the number of signatures needed to get the proposed amendment on the ballot for the November election.

The next was another constitutional amendment proposed by Raoul and Currie. It would have begun the redistricting process with a joint House-Senate commission appointed by legislative leaders but could eventually have led to each chamber

drawing its own map. It called for eight public hearings: four by each chamber.

That measure passed the Senate with votes along party lines, but it failed in the House when GOP lawmakers contended it would favor the majority party.

Then **SB 3976** emerged in the lame-duck legislative session after the November election, much to the dissatisfaction of reform groups.

“There’s no requirement that the public have an opportunity to review and comment on that after the committee approves the plan but before a vote of the full House or Senate,” Whitney Woodward of the Illinois Campaign for Political Reform testified during a House committee hearing on **SB 3976**. “We think that’s troubling because comments of public involvement are needed to look toward future, not retrospective, maps.”

“We feel that the current proposal falls way short,” agrees Brad McMillan, a former member of Quinn’s now-disbanded reform commission who continues to be involved in reform efforts. “We’re urging Gov. Quinn to veto this bill as it currently stands.”

McMillan, executive director of the Institute for Principled Leadership in Public Service at Bradley University and a member of the *Illinois Issues* Advisory Board, says not only does the legislation not provide for public hearings after the maps are drawn, “there just isn’t anything to ensure that politics isn’t going to be the No. 1 consideration.”

Along with continuing to advocate for changes in the redistricting process this time around, he says, reformers are considering reviving some version of the Fair Map Amendment to try to enact changes in the system for 10 years from now.

“The flawed system has not been significantly improved in Illinois,” McMillan says, “so I think the reform groups are going to take a serious look at another petition drive in the near future.” □

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Credits: The issue was designed by Patty Sullivan. The image on the cover was created by J. Howard Miller, an artist employed by Westinghouse. The poster was used by the War Production Co-ordinating Committee. The woman depicted is believed to have been a metal factory worker named Geraldine Doyle. Miller's image appeared in 1942. About the same time, a popular song extolled the virtues of a "Rosie the Riveter," as did a 1943 Norman Rockwell cover for the Saturday Evening Post, which made the term iconic. Although Miller's image was not the original Rosie, it has become associated with that term over the years.

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Jamey Dunn



Racial disparities plague state's dealings with drug offenders

by Jamey Dunn

A new look at statistics shows racial disparities occur in almost every step as defendants facing drug charges make their way through Illinois' criminal justice system.

In 2008, the General Assembly unanimously approved the creation of The Disproportionate Justice Study Commission to assess the effects of Illinois' drug laws on racial and ethnic minority populations and the incarceration rates of members of those populations. The commission includes legislators, law enforcement officials, corrections experts, addiction treatment specialists, members of the legal and academic communities and others. The group took testimony at three public hearings. Commission members studied Illinois statistics on arrests, prosecutions and sentencing, data collected in 2005, and compared them with national trends.

The result is a quantitative and qualitative look at the impact of drug policy on minorities in the state.

The commission's report, released earlier this year, says that a jump in prison populations in Illinois and nationwide has been fueled by changes in drug policy that emphasize punishment and enforcement over possible treatment alternatives. "These policies have especially and adversely affected African-Americans throughout the United States. The collateral consequences of imprisonment for drug crimes are varied

and significant, harming individuals, families and communities. In Illinois, the rate of imprisonment for drug offenses is substantially higher for African-Americans than for whites — a finding that has been replicated in several studies. Throughout the 1990s, African-Americans represented an average of 80 percent of all persons admitted to Illinois prisons for drug offenses," the study says.

The report notes that nationally, prison populations quadrupled from 1980 to 2000. In 1980, 6 percent of inmates were locked up for drug charges. That rate rose to 20 percent in 1999. The numbers have dropped slightly in recent years. In state prisons, which researchers said represent the "lion's share" of the national prison population, drug offenders made up 18 percent of inmates in 2008.

From 1992 to 2004, the arrest rate for drug crimes in Cook County increased by more than 25 percent, and it more than doubled in the rest of the state. The proportion of African-Americans among all individuals arrested on drug charges in Illinois went from 46 percent to 82 percent between 1983 and 1992. During the same years, the proportion of whites arrested on drug charges shrank from 41 percent to 11 percent. The number of African-Americans sent to prison for drug offenses in Illinois grew from 1,421 in 1990 to 9,088 in 2000.

Sen. Mattie Hunter, co-chair of the commission, says the numbers of African-Americans she saw incarcerated made her curious about the statistics and the causes. "There is a high[ly] disproportionate number of African-Americans incarcerated throughout the state of Illinois, on a local level as well as in our state prisons. It makes you wonder because it made me wonder, 'Why were there so many?'" says Hunter, a Chicago Democrat. "I visit the prisons. I visit the women, visit the men, to try to talk to them and encourage them. [I] go over to the county jail and talk to the women over there, and there's just so many [African-Americans]. It's just so overwhelming. ... One has to wonder, 'What the hell is going on here?'"

Regardless of the type of crime, minorities are arrested at a greater rate than whites when compared with their percentage of the general population in Illinois. However, the study found racial disparities in arrests for drug crimes in 62 of the 102 Illinois counties. In fact, the study noted that the likelihood of a defendant receiving prison time for a drug charge could be most accurately predicted by considering three factors: the nature of the crime (possession versus sale of drugs); criminal history; and race. Two of those factors should be considered for sentencing, while one clearly should never come into play.

Members of minority groups made up 66 percent of all those arrested for Class 4 possession — the lowest level of felony drug charge — in 2005, while their representation among the general population was 27 percent. Rates for drug use are comparable for all races and ethnic groups, the report says.

One theory the report puts forth for the high number of arrests is that drug deals in urban communities often take place in the open and are much easier for police officers to target. “It’s just easy to cast a net here and get something, and we see those results in the proportion of people of color behind bars,” says Daphne Baille, a spokesperson for Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities (TASC), which contracts with state government to provide court-ordered addiction treatment. The Chicago-based group assisted with the commission’s report.

According to the study, the presence of a criminal record had a correlation with future arrests. Whites and minorities with no criminal records were arrested at rates closer to their representations in the general population, while minorities with criminal records were more likely than whites with records to be arrested again. The report theorizes that a possible cause is that white offenders are more widely utilizing programs that allow them to clear their records more quickly or avoid incarceration altogether.

Cook County courts were flooded with minor drug charge cases. Seventy-two percent of defendants in the sample group for the study faced drug charges, and more than 60 percent of them were not charged with any other crimes. Of all the defendants from 2005, almost 80 percent were African-American, 13 percent were Latino and 8 percent were white.

African-American defendants were more likely than any other group to see their cases directed through the criminal court system. Among those without prior convictions, whites were more likely to be sentenced to probation or court supervision for a Class 4 drug charge than minorities. Across the state, African-American defendants were nearly five times more likely than whites to get prison time for such a possession charge.

In Cook County, African-Americans facing Class 4 possession charges were eight times more likely to receive prison sentences. For all criminal charges, Africans-Americans in Cook County were almost twice as likely to go to prison.

The study says that a “limited analysis” of the availability of court-ordered addiction treatment programs showed that, generally, white defendants had more access to them. Availability varied greatly by region, however, so the report called for more research on that subject.

Hunter says the statistics showed large gaps in the data collection throughout the state. She says methods varied from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Some data did not include racial information at all.

“Everybody’s collecting data differently. ... We need to get these folks together and figure this thing out,” Hunter says. As an example, the report presented the fact that 99 percent of people arrested by the Illinois State Police were classified as black or white, with no other ethnic description. The study proposes creating a task force that could set statewide standards for data collection.

The study recommends that state and local governments do more to use alternative programs that divert some offenders from possible jail time into addiction treatment, such as drug courts and probation for first-time offenders. Baille notes there are successful programs, such as Redeploy Illinois, that keep offenders out of prison. But they are regional and/or cannot accommodate large numbers of offenders. “It’s always a question of scale. ... We have great ideas across Illinois. We have great programs across Illinois.” She says judges are hesitant to sentence offenders to treatment when they know there isn’t room in a program and they would have to put offenders on a waiting list. Baille adds that addiction treatment — at \$5,000 to \$7,000 per person — is much less expensive for taxpayers than a year of incarceration, which she says costs about \$25,000 a year per inmate.

Any programs that would require new funding do not appear to be politically viable in the state’s current fiscal climate. The report recommends that a cut of the money that jurisdictions get

from assets forfeited in drug cases should go toward treatment programs. Hunter says she plans to start negotiating with law enforcement officials, but she admits it will be an uphill battle because the local money traditionally goes toward police efforts.

In the short-term, Hunter plans to introduce a measure that would allow legislators to attach a “Racial and Ethnic Impact Statement” to any bill that would affect criminal offenses, sentencing practices and parole or probation policies. Hunter says she hopes making legislators consider bills in the context of racial disparities in Illinois’ criminal justice system would help them see the bigger picture. Both Hunter and Baille say part of the problem on the policy end is that legislation is often created to address a specific issue, such as trying to stop drug sales near schools, without considering how it would affect the overall system.

Hunter says that after lawmakers pass such legislation geared toward a specific problem, they rarely revisit the issue to see if the law is accomplishing the original goals and to evaluate any negative unintended consequences. The report recommends Illinois re-evaluate zero-tolerance policies on drug sales near schools to see if they are accomplishing the goal of protecting children.

Rep. Dennis Reboletti, a member of the commission, makes the point that while Illinois should consider diverting funds to treatment programs, individuals addicted to drugs and alcohol must also put in the effort to get healthy. “I believe the problem of the war on drugs is treatment,” Reboletti, an Elmhurst Republican, told the *Chicago Tribune*. “The question is, once they’re in the system, does the person want to take advantage of the treatment? Because not all addicts are willing to get help.”

However, the numbers show that for a variety of reasons, minorities often miss out on taking advantage of alternative programs and avoiding the negative impact that a record of incarceration can have on their chances for jobs and a better quality of life after recovery. “There are certainly opportunities for people to basically turn their lives around,” Baille says.

As long as those chances are out there, they should be available to everyone equally, regardless of race. □

BRIEFLY

LEGISLATIVE CHECKLIST

The 97th General Assembly began its new session in January by introducing bills dealing with executive appointments, property tax relief, concealed carry of firearms and a repeal of the recently passed income tax increase. Legislators have also proposed changes to the state's Constitution. If passed by the General Assembly, voters would have to approve those proposals to change the document.

Meanwhile, Gov. Pat Quinn signed into law bills passed by the 96th General Assembly during the lame-duck session in early January.

✓ **Medicaid reform**

HB 5420, PA 096-1501 This bill, which Gov. Pat Quinn signed into law, will enact comprehensive reforms to the Medicaid system in Illinois. Under the new law, the Department of Healthcare and Family Services will expand so-called coordinated care — focused on wellness and preventive care — to cover at least 50 percent of

recipients eligible for Medicaid by 2015. That and other reforms are expected to achieve savings of more than \$624 million during the next five years.

✓ **Civil unions**

SB 1716, PA 96-1513 The governor signed into law a measure that will give same-sex and heterosexual couples who enter into a civil union rights under state law, including shared property rights, the ability to be involved in a partner's health and end-of-life decisions, and hospital visitation rights.

✓ **Income tax hike repeal**

SB 0078, HB 0175 Similar measures were proposed in the House and Senate that would roll back the income tax increase passed at the end of the last legislative session. Under those bills, the new rates of 5 percent for individuals and 7 percent for businesses would return to the previous 3 percent and 4.8 percent. Two Republicans,

Rep. Michael Connelly of Lisle and Sen. Matt Murphy of Palatine, are sponsoring the bills.

✓ **Appointments**

SB 0001 Executive appointees serving past their terms would be out of a job under this measure, sponsored by Senate President John Cullerton, a Chicago Democrat. The governor could reappoint individuals currently serving past their terms, and they would have to be approved by the Senate. The measure had no House sponsor as of press time.

✓ **Borrowing**

SB 0003 Under this proposal from Senate President John Cullerton of Chicago, the state would borrow \$8.75 billion to pay down its overdue bills that are owed to schools, vendors and social service providers, as well as income tax refunds owed to corporations. As of press time, the bill had no House sponsor.

University of Chicago professor makes dinosaur discovery

It is the dawn of a new age — in dinosaur history.

Scientists announced in January the discovery of the small *Eodromaes*, Greek for “dawn runner,” one of the first flesh-eating dinosaurs, or theropods, that lived 230 million years ago.

The discovery of *Eodromaes* occurred in the foothills of the Andes Mountains in the Ischigualasto Formation in northwestern Argentina. During the dinosaur's time, this area was the southwestern edge of the supercontinent Pangaea.

Over five million years, volcanic eruptions covered the valley with layers of ash. The discovery team was able to determine the dinosaur's age by identifying radioactive elements in the ash.

Two skeletons and the fragmentary parts of three others were found, providing the team with a nearly complete skeleton of *Eodromaes murphi*. The dated skeletons

provide a roadmap for when the features of the carnivorous line first started to evolve, says Paul Sereno, the University of Chicago paleontologist who co-led the team that discovered *Eodromaes*.

The dinosaur had features that were inherited by later theropods, including *Tyrannosaurus rex*, such as grasping claws, meat-cutting teeth and a tail that served as a balancing rod, he says. However, *Eodromaes* was much smaller than *Tyrannosaurus rex*. *Eodromaes* weighed about 11 pounds and was about 4 feet long.

The findings of Sereno and Ricardo Martinez, a paleontologist at the National University of San Juan in Argentina who



Eodromaes weighed about 11 pounds and was 4 feet long.

co-led the team, are reported in the January 14 edition of the journal *Science*.

Sereno says he was interested in finding the answers to how long the rise to power took for dinosaurs, if competition was involved or if it happened by accident.

“We tried to do what people had not done before at all, which is go to a place that is so rich in fossils, a thousand fossils,

Property tax relief

SB 0002 Under a proposal sponsored by Sen. William Delgado, a Chicago Democrat, Illinois homeowners who file income tax returns would begin receiving annual property tax relief checks beginning in 2012. At the start of the 2012 fiscal year in July, almost \$65 million a month in general revenue funds would be transferred to a property tax relief fund. The money in the relief fund would be split evenly among all homeowners, who would get rebate checks in the mail. The bill would also eliminate the current income tax credit for property tax. As of press time, there was no sponsor in the House.

Medical marijuana

HB 0030 The state would begin a pilot program that would allow seriously ill patients access to medical marijuana. The Illinois Department of Public Health would issue permits to individuals allowing them to have up to six cannabis plants and two ounces of dried usable cannabis. Rep. Lou Lang, a Skokie Democrat, sponsored the measure in the House. As of press time, there were no sponsors in the Senate.

Concealed carry

HB 0148, HB 0112 Individuals at least 21 years old who have completed specified training requirements would be allowed to carry a firearm in the state with a permit issued by a county sheriff, under a measure sponsored by Rep. Brandon Phelps, a Harrisburg Democrat, and a similar measure sponsored by Rep. Michael Unes, a Pekin Republican.

Sex offenders

HB 0187 Legislation sponsored by Rep. Robert Pritchard, a Hinckley Republican, would address so-called Romeo and Juliet cases. An offender not more than four years older than the victim can petition to be excluded from the sex offender registry if the victim consented and is at least 14 years old. No sponsors were added in the Senate, as of press time.

Merger of two offices

HJRCA 1 Under this measure, sponsored by Rep. Dave Winters, a Shirland Republican, the offices of state comptroller and state treasurer would merge, eliminating the comptroller's office. Comptroller Judy Baar Topinka and Treasurer Dan Ruther-

ford, who were elected last November, support the concept.

Lame-duck session

HJRCA 4 Legislative sessions between the end of a general election and beginning of the next legislative session would be eliminated under a measure sponsored by Rep. Chapin Rose, a Mahomet Republican. The bill would begin a new two-year legislative session on the first weekday of December after a November general election. Legislators would not be allowed to meet between the election and that day other than to deal with an emergency.

Pension benefits

HJRCA 5 Bills increasing pension benefits for state workers or expanding benefits to more workers would require a three-fifths vote, under a measure sponsored by House Speaker Michael Madigan. The measure would require that if a governor vetoes or makes changes to a bill that increases benefits under any pension or retirement system, the bill could not become law without the support of three-fifths of the lawmakers in each chamber.

Lauren N. Johnson

and so layer-cake-like, that you could actually try to see what happened over time and how dinosaurs came to dominance," Sereno says.

Martinez and Sereno based their findings on years of research — collecting, studying and naming fossils that were found in the region. Paleontologists have named a thousand fossils or skeletons, many of which were not from dinosaurs. The discovery of *Eodromaeus* provides greater insight into how dinosaurs rose to dominance, Sereno says.

"This is the best window we have on that time period. It appears that dinosaurs evolved in the shadows of other animals, other reptiles, for quite some time — tens of millions of years — and they already had some of their classic features," Sereno says.

No signs of competition were found. Their rise was accidental, he says.

"It took many millions of years and chance events unrelated to the anatomy

before dinosaurs took over — meaning there was a lot of happenstance involved."

The implications of their study go far beyond dinosaurs, says Lindsay Zanno, Bucksbaum Fellow and paleontologist at The Field Museum in Chicago.

"One of the most interesting aspects of the study relates to how ecosystems respond to extinction. These kinds of studies have great relevancy for the current environmental crisis that we face today with our modern ecosystems," Zanno says.

The authors were able to present the types of terrestrial vertebrates that were living in this period, evidence of local extinction events and how the ecosystem responded, she says.

"When we look at the paleontological record, we are looking at small windows of time in isolated areas. It is difficult to get a global picture of what is going on from these snapshots. But the more of these snapshots we can put together, the

bigger picture we get," Zanno says.

In 1991 Martinez and Sereno led another team that discovered *Eoraptor*. Originally identified as a theropod, *Eoraptor* was later identified as a sauropodomorph, a plant-eating dinosaur, after further examination of its teeth, skull and limbs.

"We are quite confident that we have it right," Sereno says.

Sereno has been interested in the origin of dinosaurs since he entered the field. There was little information available, and it was difficult to find a sample of the animals from the period when dinosaurs first emerged, he says.

The extinction of dinosaurs has been given more attention than their origin. Much has been written about causal agents that might have caused their extinction, he says.

"The origin is a little bit harder to get your hands around, but the questions are big, and they are out there."

Kendall Cramer

CAPITAL PLAN Court rules bill unconstitutional

A court ruled the state's capital construction plan unconstitutional because of the way legislators drafted the bill that contained the plan's funding.

The 1st District Appellate Court in Chicago found the legislation that created the \$31 billion program did not meet the "single subject" rule in the Illinois Constitution, which requires that one piece of legislation can only deal with one topic.

According to the court's opinions: "The single subject rule is designed to prevent the passage of legislation that, if standing alone, could not muster the necessary votes for enactment," the opinion states, citing an Illinois Supreme Court ruling in a 2005 case, *People v. Olender*. "The practice of bundling less popular legislation with more palatable bills so that the well-received bills would carry the unpopular ones to passage is known as 'logrolling.' In addition to preventing logrolling, the single subject rule also facilitates the enactment of bills through an orderly and informed legislative process."

The law increased sales taxes on a variety of hygiene products, candy, soft drinks and alcoholic beverages. It also increased some licensing fees. The most controversial components of the bill allow video poker in bars and restaurants across the state and the leasing of the lottery to a private management firm.

The state Supreme Court granted the state's request to put the effect of the ruling on hold until the court can weigh in on the issue. As of press time, the court had not released an opinion on the case. If the Supreme Court upholds the lower court's opinion, legislators could pass the components of the plan in separate pieces of legislation.

"[The appellate court's] decision has far-reaching consequences and, if not stayed, will have serious adverse effects on the state's operations and finances, including \$31 billion in capital development projects currently under way that were authorized by the Capital Projects Acts (e.g., construction and improvement of public schools, hospitals, libraries, parks and roads), providing substantial employment for Illinois citizens," Attorney General Lisa Madigan wrote in her request for a stay.

The state argued that all the provisions in the bill fall under the topic of revenue, but the court ruled that revenue was too broad a subject because any subject that might affect the state's economy could be considered related to revenue.

Rocky Wirtz, owner of the Chicago Blackhawks hockey team, as well as Wirtz Beverage Illinois, a liquor distribution company, filed the lawsuit against the state in 2009. At the time, Wirtz told the *Chicago Tribune* that he understood that the state needed revenues for capital projects, but he took issue with the way the plan was rushed through the legislature.

Wirtz's suit also claims the increase in sales tax for wine and spirits is unfair. The new rates set the tax at more than \$1 per gallon for some wine and ciders and more than \$8 per gallon for beverages with higher alcohol content. The tax on beer increased but stayed under \$1 per gallon.

"This lawsuit was always about how the legislature passed this bill and the discriminatory tax on wine and spirits. The decision affirms that, and we are gratified by it," said Julia Szniewajs, a spokeswoman for Wirtz Beverage, in a written statement.

Jamey Dunn

Rule grants same-sex hospital visitation

As Illinois lawmakers debated legislation on civil unions, lawmakers were reminded that when the late state Rep. Larry McKeon's longtime partner was dying, McKeon was barred from the hospital room because he lacked proof that he had medical power of attorney. When McKeon went home to get the papers, the man died with no one at his side.

On January 18, a presidential directive went into effect ordering hospitals that participate in Medicare and Medicaid to allow hospital visitation rights to same-sex partners. The rule precedes the July 1 enactment of Illinois' new civil unions law, which was signed by Gov. Pat Quinn in late January. **Senate Bill 1716** gives couples united in a civil union the full state rights granted to those who are

married. That includes automatic hospital visitation rights and the ability to make emergency medical decisions for partners.

"This policy impacts millions of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) Americans and their families," Brian Bond, deputy director of the White House office of public engagement, wrote in a White House blog. "The president saw an injustice and felt very strongly about correcting this and has spoken about it often over the years." Bond quoted President Barack Obama's words in April 2010 when he first issued the directive calling for rules to be made on same-sex visitation rights: "There are few moments in our lives that call for greater compassion and companionship than when a loved one is admit-

ted to the hospital. In these hours of need and moments of pain and anxiety, all of us would hope to have a hand to hold, a shoulder on which to lean — a loved one to be there for us, as we would be there for them."

"First of all, it's a tremendous affirmation of our same-sex couples and domestic partners, some of whom have been in relationships for 30 or 40 years," says Ryan Erickson, who is manager of the legal clinic for the Chicago Center on Halsted, the largest LGBT community center in the Midwest. "It's only right, of course, that a partner be admitted to the hospital in order to be by their partner's side if something goes wrong. It's a matter of dignity. That's why this is important. I think it's a step forward for LGBT equality."

Maureen Foertsch McKinney

For more news see the *Illinois Issues* website at <http://illinoisissues.uis.edu>

State marks Reagan centennial

February marked the 100th anniversary of Illinois native and former President Ronald Reagan's birthday.

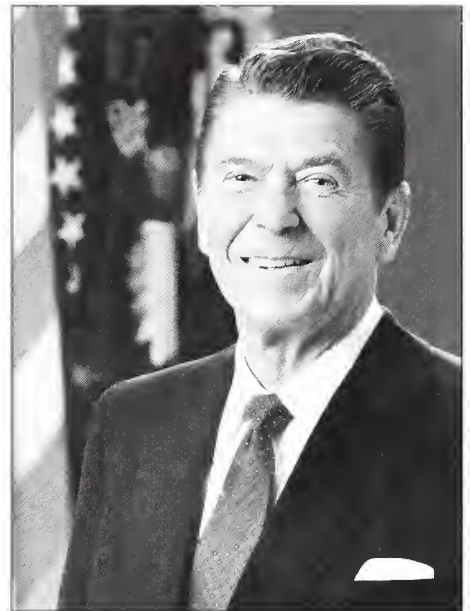
Ann Lewis, vice chairman of the Illinois State Reagan Centennial Commission, says by the end of 2011, Illinois will have held about 50 events to celebrate the centennial in Dixon, Sterling, his birthplace of Tampico and other towns.

Lewis says Illinois claims connections to four men who served as president of the United States: Abraham Lincoln, Ulysses S. Grant, Reagan and Barack Obama. But Reagan was the only one born here. "[Reagan] took advantage of the wonderful opportunities that you find in small-town America, where neighbors help neighbors," says Lewis.

During his time in Illinois, Reagan studied economics at Eureka College, where he played football and was captain of the swim team. Beginning when he was 15, Reagan reportedly rescued 77 swimmers as a lifeguard over seven summers in Dixon. Lewis says he brought a Midwestern "can-do" attitude with him to the White House.

Reagan, in an excerpt of his farewell address to the nation, said, "And, I won a nickname, 'The Great Communicator.' But I never thought it was my style or the words I used that made a difference; It was the content. I wasn't a great communicator, but I communicated great things [that] came from the heart of a great nation."

Lauren N. Johnson



Former President Ronald Reagan

Quinn signs pact on trade with China

As the state's economy continues to struggle, Illinois is looking to increase exports to China. Gov. Pat Quinn signed an agreement that will support Illinois' trade with China through a global exchange of products and services in the state and overseas.

"We are in one world; it's a global world; it's a global economy," said Quinn at the signing ceremony in Chicago. "The opportunity for our country and the people of China to come together and work together in trade and economic cooperation is important to our entire globe."

Under the agreement, China's Beijing International Brand Management Center, which works with Chinese companies in such sectors as fashion, leather goods, wine and shoes, will create distribution centers specializing in American goods in Beijing and Shanghai to encourage their citizens to purchase Illinois products and services.

The centers will provide protection of intellectual property rights, Chinese distribution development, channel construction, marketing and other services to Illinois companies in China. The state also plans to recommend Illinois agricultural, auto parts and construction machinery products to the center in Beijing.

"By setting up two American Goods Centers in the Chaoyang District of Beijing and the Changning District of Shanghai, the International Brand Management Center will provide a 'one-stop shop' to promote Illinois products and services to be sold in the Chinese market. The centers will also be an important platform to promote Chinese investment to Illinois," Tan Li, vice director of the China Association of International Trade's Beijing International Brand Management Center, said in a written statement.

In addition, the plan calls for purchase centers for Chinese goods in Chicago to promote Chinese investment in Illinois. In 2009, Illinois' exports to China reached \$2.47 billion. More than 30 Chinese companies have investments in Illinois and, according to Quinn, provide thousands of jobs in the state.

"This agreement reaffirms our mutual commitment to work together to increase business relationships between Illinois and China," says Marcelyn Love, a spokeswoman for the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. "Establishment of these centers will help put the state in an extremely competitive position as we continue our efforts to market Illinois globally."

Prior to this pact, Quinn announced that more than a dozen Illinois providers of soybean products have entered into sales agreements with buyers from 24 Chinese companies. In recent years, the state's agricultural exports to China —

Illinois' third-largest export destination — have increased from \$149 million in 2007 to \$552 million in 2009.

"[This] agreement will boost small- and mid-sized businesses throughout Illinois, while ensuring that our state remains a leader in the global marketplace," Quinn said in a written statement. "This partnership will provide Illinois businesses with the tools they need to enter the Chinese market and continue to grow our economy."

Lauren N. Johnson



Appeal expected in court ruling on 'moment of silence'

Atheist Rob Sherman says he will contest to the U.S. Supreme Court an appellate decision to uphold Illinois' Silent Reflection and Student Prayer Act.

Illinois school districts were told by the state superintendent of schools to comply with the law in mid-January after a federal injunction was lifted.

Illinois lawmakers first approved the law in October 2007. Two years later, the law was declared unconstitutional in response to a complaint Sherman had made on behalf of his daughter, Dawn, a student at Buffalo Grove High School. In October 2010, a federal appellate court voted to overturn that ruling.

"This action means the act is now in effect," the state superintendent told districts in a message issued when the injunction was lifted in January.

"We are appealing to the Supreme Court of the United States," says Sherman, who adds that California atheist and attorney Michael Newdow will handle

the appeal, which had not been filed as of press time.

"If the law had not mentioned prayer and if the law also mentioned that students could engage in any silent activity of their choice, then the law would be constitutional. It would not be for the purpose of sneaking prayer and religion into the classroom," Sherman says. "It would still be terrible policy because it would still waste instructional time for students to be engaging in personal reflection ... that they should be engaging in on their own time. But it wouldn't be unconstitutional. If the law allowed students to do anything they want, it wouldn't be unconstitutional, but this law, the law that we challenged, promoted kids to pray."

A sponsor of the bill in the House said the court decision was a form of vindication.

"The court decision said what I've been saying all along. This is not about

religion. It's not about school prayer. It was simply an opportunity to allow young people to reflect before starting the school day," says Rep. Will Davis, a Homewood Democrat.

Sherman says he has been lobbying lawmakers on the issue.

"I'm going back to the Illinois General Assembly to see if I can find a legislator who can sponsor a bill to either repeal the unconstitutional student prayer act or amend it to make it voluntary."

He says he is also appealing to school administrators and school boards to move the moment of silence prior to the start of the school day.

"That way, you would not have this unconstitutional law that is damaging public education by forcing teachers to stand around doing nothing during instructional time. You're left with a situation where it's either pray or stand around and do nothing."

Maureen Foertsch McKinney

Law students learn to draft legislation

Students at the John Marshall Law School have the chance to learn about the legislative process from someone who has watched it firsthand.

Kevin Hull, a former lawyer on House Speaker Michael Madigan's staff, has started his fifth year teaching a legislative drafting class, which focuses on real-life applications.

Hull's students are confronted with legal and public policy issues of the day and then asked to produce workable solutions in legislative form. For their final exam last semester, students were challenged to redraft the Illinois Constitution. Their goal was to improve the redistricting process, which is the way the state draws the districts from which lawmakers are elected. The students conducted research on best practices, as well as the way the process is handled in other states, and rewrote that section of the Illinois Constitution in appropriate language.

Guest speakers who directly influence public policy visit Hull's classes, bringing with them the issues they are currently dealing with. Speakers who frequently return to the class include Matthew O'Shea, chief of staff for House Minority Leader Tom Cross, and Chicago Alderman Brendan Reilly. Several state legislators have also addressed the students. "It's fun to see the guest speaker get somewhat grilled by the students," Hull says. He adds that speakers who come to his class find they have to "not only know the issues, but in many instances defend their position on the issue." He recruits speakers working in state, county and municipal governments

so students can get a feel for the issues and procedures unique to each level.

Hull's students also travel to Chicago's City Hall and the Illinois Statehouse in Springfield to watch lawmakers in action.

Some of the real-life topics that students have considered include licensing food vendor trucks in Chicago and directing a certain percentage of state contracts to veteran-owned businesses. Hull says so far, no language drafted by his students has ended up in a final law passed by any legislative body. However, he says the research his students have compiled has influenced policymakers, as well as some legislation that has been passed into law in the state. Hull, who is a graduate of the John Marshall Law School, says "going down to Springfield and having those relationships where we can get invited into conference rooms and offices" sets his class apart from similar offerings at other law schools.

Carmen Forte Jr., a Cook County assistant state's attorney, says after taking the class and learning about the legislative process, he feels much more comfortable pointing out trends and ways to improve the law to his office's legislative unit. "I look at the [Illinois General Assembly's] website almost every day."

Hull hopes to work with his alma mater to create an internship program for graduates of the class. He says students could partner with entities such as the school's Fair Housing Legal Support Center and Clinic and Veterans Legal Support Center to help research and draft policy. "We truly have a humming universe within the school that we could focus on."

Jamey Dunn

UIUC researchers find a key to easier biofuel production

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign scientists helped to engineer a new strain of yeast that could eventually make the production of biofuels, such as ethanol, faster and less expensive.

Yong-Su Jin, an assistant professor in the Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition at UIUC, was principal investigator for the study, which developed a yeast strain that produces ethanol more efficiently. Jin worked with researchers from Berkeley National Laboratory, the University of California and energy company BP. The study was backed in part by the Energy Biosciences Institute, which is funded by BP.

To create ethanol, yeast is used to metabolize plant sugars. The process creates ethanol and carbon dioxide. Yeasts easily process glucose, which is the primary sugar in plants, but have more difficulty with xylose, which is found in stems and leaves. Yeasts that have been biologically engineered to process xylose do it slowly and tend to metabolize all the glucose before starting in on the xylose.

"It's like giving meat and broccoli to my kids," Jin said in a written statement. "They usually eat the meat first and the broccoli later."

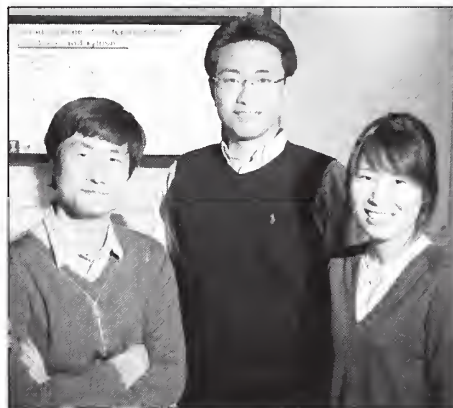
However, the research group's new strain not only metabolizes xylose 20 per-

cent more efficiently than any other yeast, it also can convert both sugars at the same time. Jin says the strain is better at converting xylose to ethanol than any other strand being studied. It can process both sugars simultaneously in the same amount of time it would take to metabolize either on its own.

"If you do the fermentation by using only cellobiose [a precursor to glucose] or xylose, it takes 48 hours," Suk-Jin Ha, postdoctoral researcher and lead author of the group's study, said in a written statement. "But if you do the co-fermentation with the cellobiose and xylose, double the amount of sugar is consumed in the same amount of time and produces more than double the amount of ethanol. It's a huge synergistic effect of co-fermentation."

Jin says the development could lead to cheaper biofuel production because currently, plant starch, which is more expensive, is used. But with the new process, cheaper biomass such as sugar cane could more easily be turned into ethanol. He adds that previously, two fermentation processes were needed to convert both sugars, but the new strain can accomplish it in one.

"We don't have to do two separate fermentations," he said. "We can do it all in one pot. And the yield is even higher than



Postdoctoral researcher Suk-Jin Ha, food science professor Yong-Su Jin and student Soo Rin Kim

the industry standard. We are pretty sure that this research can be commercialized very soon."

Jin says the new strain could be used on an industrial scale in the next few years. However, he says other steps in the creation of ethanol still need to be researched. "We've solved one of the problems." But, he says, there are still several others in the process that need to be tackled to make biofuel production cheap and fast. Jin says one possible improvement would be finding a way to isolate the sugars from the original biomass before the fermentation process.

James Dunn

4-H clubs record documentaries

The University of Illinois Extension and the Illinois 4-H Foundation teamed up to supply 4-H clubs in 12 counties throughout the state with video equipment to film documentaries.

The 4-H club participants researched various topics, interviewed community members and filmed videos on issues that affected them directly, including year-round school, online social networking and teacher layoffs.

At this year's Illinois State Fair, the Extension will include an online component in addition to the traditional presentations to reach more 4-H members with an interest in video technology. This year, members across the state will have the opportunity to produce a video or map exhibit to be judged online.

"The University of Illinois Extension sees video and other technology projects

as a core component of our offerings to kids who are living in a technology-rich world," says Lisa Bouillion Diaz, U of I Extension specialist in technology and youth development.

This summer, a 4-H club in DuPage County covered homelessness. Through video technology, the club explained how youth can help to lessen homelessness in their communities.

Mike Farnon, volunteer leader of the club at the Woodridge Community Resource Center, says: "Like in any aspect of life, the documentation of your opinion has become foremost. The recording of what people say has become an integral part of our society."

Students took on the roles of editors, reporters, camera operators, directors and actors to produce eight- to 10-minute documentaries. Farnon adds, "I wanted to get

them to think about something outside of their own world."

They interviewed different organizations representing the homeless in DuPage County, as well as experts from the University of Illinois, on such issues as the function of community resources, shelters and food pantries in communities where homelessness is prevalent.

Farnon says the purpose of the summer course was to teach the students how to express their opinions through technology. "At some point, forming your opinion and knowing what you want to say is more important than the technology that you use to say it," says Farnon.

Other 4-H clubs in Cass-Schuyler, DuPage, Knox, Macoupin, Marshall-Putnam, Monroe, Peoria, Randolph, Rock Island and Vermilion counties also participated in film projects.

Lauren N. Johnson

Bumblebee species decline, study shows

Photograph courtesy of wikipedia

A recent University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign study found a decline in a number of bumblebee populations throughout the United States within the last two decades, including two species native to Illinois.

UIUC scientists conducted a first-of-its-kind study that focused on geographic distribution and gene samples from populations of eight of the 50 known species of bumblebees in North America to determine the cause of the decline.

Nationally, four of the eight species tested — eastern *Bombus pennsylvanicus*, western *Bombus occidentalis*, *Bombus affinis* and *Bombus terricola* — have shrunk in size by 96 percent.

The researchers created a database of more than 73,000 museum records and compared them with samples collected based on national surveys of more than 16,000 specimens.

National populations of the eastern *Bombus pennsylvanicus*, native to Illinois and one of the most common species found in the Midwest, have declined. However, four other species of bumblebees — western *Bombus bifarius* and *Bombus vosnesenskii* and the eastern *Bombus bimaculatus* and *Bombus impatiens* — remain stable.

Sydney Cameron, a professor of entomology at UIUC who led the three-year study, says the impact of the decline of prevalent species to the natural ecosystem and the state's agriculture are not always known at first.

Gene Robinson, also a professor of entomology at UIUC, says the decline would have a low impact on Illinois' agriculture but is still cause for concern. Bumblebees, pollinators that fertilize both wild plants and crops, are primarily used for tomatoes in Illinois, which Robinson says is not a large industry.

But, he adds, the decline could be an indicator of future environmental disturbances. "What about [a decline in] other species that haven't been studied yet?" Robinson says environmental degradation — bumblebees losing their homes — is another possible cause for the decline.

Scientists also found a higher prevalence of a bacterial parasite in the declining species. The study implicates the parasite as another potential cause for the decline. "We are trying to find out where the pathogen came from and when," says Cameron.

She adds that other possible causes for the decline could be low genetic diversity and climate changes.

Researchers say the decline and geographic shift — to southwest regions of the country — could possibly have a long-term effect on the central and southern parts of the state.

"Sometimes in biology, there is a lag time between when something happens and when it's going to impact a certain species," says Cameron. She says her recent study may not be enough to fully understand the rapid decline of bumblebees but that UIUC plans to do further research. "A lot more work needs to be done."

Lauren N. Johnson



Photograph courtesy of Sydney Cameron



Entomologist Sydney Cameron

Crop protection goes online

A website launched in January by the Illinois Department of Agriculture aims to protect pesticide-sensitive crops in the state through more communication between farmers and commercial pesticide applicators.

Driftwatch.org, the free-of-charge site, allows organic and specialty farmers to enter the location of their fields into a registry displayed on an online map, which pesticide applicators can use to avoid spraying sensitive crops.

Each time a field is added to the registry, the online program sends an e-mail alert to applicators who have registered to use the voluntary site. There are about 17,000 licensed commercial applicators that spray chemicals in the state.

In 2009, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency proposed guidance for new pesticide labeling to reduce drift, and the agency expanded drift monitoring to the Midwestern states.

The site was first created by Purdue University in Indiana in 2009 and is maintained by the Office of the Indiana State Chemist and Seed Commissioner, which administers several of the state's agricultural laws. The program was adapted for use in Illinois and other states with funding from the federal Environmental Protection Agency. Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin are currently using the program to prevent harmful spraying to such sensitive crops as those certified as organic and in nurseries, along with grapes, pumpkins, melons, tomatoes and other fruits and vegetables.

Ohio plans to implement Driftwatch in 2012.

Jeff Squibb, communications director for the Illinois Department of Agriculture, says commercial farmers with at least a half-acre of land can register on the site. "In recent years, there has been more organic growth in the state than there has ever been before, and because [certain crops] are sensitive to pesticides, it's a problem."

Squibb says the program is "rather simplistic in its concept" and creates a necessary line of communication between farmers and pesticide applicators in the state.

"The success is going to depend on how diligently the commercial and organic growers enter their data and how often

the pesticide applicators check the site. There's no doubt about it," Squibb adds. The department hopes the site will minimize problems prior to actual drifting and that the two groups can "peacefully coexist."

Jean Payne, president of the Illinois Fertilizer and Chemical Association, says the group supports Driftwatch and

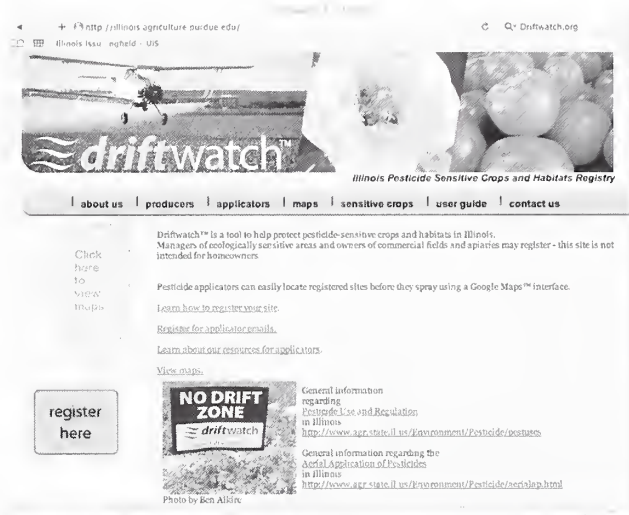
encourages pesticide applicators to register and use the site. She adds that it will take education and time for farmers to become familiar with the site before it can become an effective tool in Illinois.

Wes King, policy coordinator for the Illinois Stewardship Alliance, says there is an issue involving pesticide drift in the state, and the new program will hopefully lead to a resolution. "[The program] is a

great first step for getting producers and farmers to communicate."

King says local farmers have already begun registering on the new site. "We would've liked to see something stronger in terms of protecting farmers with their sensitive crops." However, King says that his group and many others will watch and monitor the site for continued problems of drifting.

Lauren N. Johnson



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High court, high cost

It's time Illinois changes the way justices take the bench,
critics of recent expensive campaigns say

by Mike Ramsey

Illinois Supreme Court Chief Justice Thomas Kilbride could breathe a sigh of relief last November when he earned a 66 percent retention vote in his Third Judicial District, after detractors had tried to remove him during an unusual and expensive election in which he faced no opponent. It was a different story for three of Kilbride's high court colleagues in neighboring Iowa: Voters dumped them after being inundated with provocative anti-retention messages.

All of the top judges had been targeted for ouster under a trend that sees outside groups spending increased sums of money in hopes of influencing voters who normally are apathetic to judicial contests. Some of the attack money in 2010 came from national organizations with axes to grind in the Midwest. Kilbride, a Rock Island Democrat, was beset by special interests largely for his role in overturning an Illinois law that capped medical malpractice awards. In Iowa, social conservatives sought payback for the high court's legalization of gay marriage.

Good-government advocates in Illinois say the new era is dangerous to the judiciary and a threat to the public's already shaky faith in it. They hope the latest high-profile skirmishes will persuade state lawmakers here to reconsider legislative or constitutional remedies, though they concede no alternative may be foolproof. Previously discussed ideas include the public financing of judicial elections or the merit selection of high court judges, which is done in 24 states.

"The elections are going to get more and more expensive and nastier," says Dawn Clark Netsch, a former Illinois comptroller and state senator who is a director of the American Judicature Society. "People don't believe they can trust their judges, their impartiality, their fairness, their lack of bias. This is just a disaster for our whole system in this country because the independence of the judiciary is almost totally dependent on the acceptance of the fact that they are to be trusted."

Even Ed Murnane, who coordinated the controversial attacks on Kilbride, agrees a change may be warranted. But he also contends that candidates who seek the bench should be subject to voter scrutiny.

"A judge has the authority to sentence someone to death in Illinois. A judge has the authority to take a child away from his parents," says Murnane, head of the Arlington Heights-based Illinois Civil Justice League and its campaign-finance arm, JUSTPAC. "Judges have more authority than any legislator has, and they have the opportunity to do this single-handedly."

Nationally, spending on state supreme court races more than doubled between 1999 and 2009, compared with the previous decade, to \$206.9 million from \$83.3 million, according to a Justice at Stake Campaign study released over the summer. Deep-pocketed special interest groups, from trial lawyers to insurance companies to unions, dominated the pool of contributions, the watchdog coalition reported. The cash infusions were increasingly used on expensive broadcast advertising.

In 2004, the Illinois Supreme Court contest between Republican Lloyd Karmeier and Democrat Gordon Maag set a record \$9.3 million for spending in a U.S. judicial race. Their Fifth District battle was centered in Madison County, long reputed to be a mecca of huge jury awards. Tort reform became the dominant issue, and Karmeier, whose campaign was backed by the state GOP and proponents of caps on "pain and suffering" awards, prevailed. Unions, plaintiffs' attorneys and the Illinois Democratic Party were on the losing side.

"I think there's a lot of concern among elected officials about the way these races have escalated," says Cynthia Canary, executive director of the Illinois Campaign for Political Reform. "The parties have to be looking at this and saying, 'We've got to call a truce on this arms race somewhere.'"

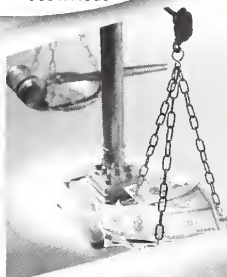
Last fall, JUSTPAC and its national allies targeted Kilbride after he voted with a 4-2 majority in early 2010 to overturn statutory caps on jury awards. The high court's Democrats ruled that lawmakers had exceeded their authority under the separation of powers. Had Kilbride failed to get at least 60 percent of a favorable retention vote — normally a slam dunk for a sitting justice — the stage would have been set for a partisan, contested election. That, in turn, could have tipped the Supreme Court's balance to the GOP.

Two other justices, Republican Robert Thomas and Democrat Charles Freeman, each received roughly 80 percent of voter approval after their own quiet retention campaigns.

In contrast, Kilbride was dogged by ads that questioned his competence in criminal case rulings. In JUSTPAC's visceral broadcast commercials, actors portraying convicted murderers and rapists told voters that Kilbride was their ally.

"Kilbride sided with felons over law enforcement or victims"

— JUSTPAC ad



**Kilbride is...
"a tough-as-nails judge"
... "on the side of law
and order"**

— law enforcement professionals endorsement ad

Prosecutors and police officials defended the judge in rebuttal ads, and the originals were deemed so egregious that they prompted a rare rebuke from an Illinois State Bar Association panel that reviews fairness complaints in appellate and Supreme Court races. Robert Cummins, chairman of the ISBA's Tone and Conduct Committee, says the anti-Kilbride spots were "not only false but were crafted to be misleading."

Canary, the government-reform advocate, says the JUSTPAC ads did not accurately reflect the role of a review judge. Moreover, she says, there was a "total disconnect" between the crime theme of the ads and the civil law issues — particularly tort reform and product liability — that truly interested Kilbride's detractors.

Murnane disagrees. He says the Illinois Civil Justice League analyzed Kilbride's record on criminal cases and determined he often ruled against "the people," or the law enforcement

professionals who bring cases on the public's behalf. Murnane, who did not provide case examples, acknowledges crime was the most potent topic to take to the electorate.

"We were trying to remove him," he says. "You have to go for the message that's going to resonate with voters, and that's what we tried to do."

The Kilbride election, which generated more than \$3 million in spending, ranks as the second most expensive retention election in the nation, says Charles Hall, a spokesman for the Justice at Stake Campaign.

JUSTPAC's contributors in the second half of 2010 included the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, which donated \$150,000, and the American Justice Partnership (AJP), which gave \$180,000, according to the latest state campaign-disclosure filings. The Washington, D.C.-based AJP says its mission is to offset the influence of "the trial bar, unions and other liberal opponents of free enterprise" by partner-

ing with like-minded organizations at the state level.

In the end, pro-Kilbride forces easily outspent JUSTPAC. And while observers say

Kilbride had a right to fight

back, they worry that the sheer volume of money contributed on his behalf raises questions about what donors may expect in return.

The Kilbride campaign's major financial supporter was the Illinois Democratic Party, which has a vested interest in the next legislative remap and its expected court challenges. The political organization transferred nearly \$1.5 million to the Kilbride campaign between July 1 and December 31, 2010. The Illinois Federation of Teachers donated \$450,000 toward Kilbride's retention.

**"I've been
attacked harshly,
repeatedly, and
falsely"**

— Tom Kilbride



IFT spokesman Dave Comerford says the union has long supported Kilbride for his education advocacy and anticipates that the high court may consider “a number of issues that are important to working families.”

Kilbride declined an invitation to be interviewed but released a written statement to *Illinois Issues* expressing frustration over his recent experience.

“I hope no one else would have to go through the kind of campaign I just finished. It damages the judiciary by undermining its independence and questioning the fairness and impartiality of judges in their decision-making. As judges, we wear a black robe, not a red or a blue one,” Kilbride said.

He indicated support for studying alternatives to Illinois’ current method of electing judges, but he warned there are no easy solutions.

Karmeier, his colleague who was involved in the expensive two-way race in 2004, echoed that sentiment in his own statement to *Illinois Issues*.

“Each approach has its proponents, and the debate can often be contentious,” Karmeier said. “Any calm, reason and experience that can be brought to the discussion is, therefore, particularly welcome.”

Reform proponents agree.

Illinois is one of only nine states that elect supreme court judges. Supporters of merit selection, which is already used to tap the state’s associate judges at the circuit level, say it would diminish the role of special-interest money and would free judges from the burden of having to raise campaign money, at least initially. As success stories, proponents cite the examples of Missouri and Delaware, where screening panels present a short list of judicial candidates to the governors. Judges typically stand for subsequent retention in merit-selection states.

The major hurdle in Illinois, of course, would be persuading lawmakers — and ultimately voters — to amend the state Constitution. That kind of ballot initiative failed in Nevada in November, presumably because residents there were leery of turning over their judge-making powers to a relative few. A common refrain among the skeptics of merit selection is: Who’s picking the pickers?

“Polls show that very few voters know much at all about supreme court justices. They often complain of feeling uninformed, and yet giving up the vote is inherently an emotional decision,” says Hall of the Justice at Stake Campaign. “In recent years, it’s been a more populist time in our nation’s history. In populist periods, people want to vote.”

Not everyone favors such a radical change here. The Illinois State Bar Association has supported keeping voters in charge of electing state Supreme Court judges. But the ISBA has recommended shifting appellate and district court judges to a merit selection system that would be administered by the Supreme Court, spokesman David Anderson says.

Observers say the reform proposals with the most realistic chances of gaining traction in Illinois are those that could be imposed through statute, such as transforming judicial elections into nonpartisan contests. In theory, that would diminish the influence of politics and money. But even the League of

Women Voters of Illinois questions whether it’s possible to completely erase party influence in this state, issues coordinator Mary Schaafsma says.

The organization is more vigorously pushing the idea of public financing in judicial elections, given the recent costs of Supreme Court contests in Illinois. Only four states have adopted a public financing model, but North Carolina has received favorable attention for the system it implemented in 2002. Under a program financed through legal license fees and a state income-tax checkoff, appellate and Supreme Court hopefuls can tap into a pool of public campaign money if they raise enough qualifying funds through small donations. Candidates in the nonpartisan elections must observe spending limits but can receive additional support if a privately financed opponent spends more money.

Netsch, the former state legislator and constitutional officer, says a public-finance program could succeed here. But she notes it would not stop the type of independent expenditure that created a stir in Justice Kilbride’s retention election last fall. The U.S. Supreme Court recently strengthened the federal protections for independent campaign spending.

That’s no small point for some. The specter of a future barrage of commercials by a JUSTPAC or other group threatens to dampen any discussion about revamping judicial elections, says Steve Brown, spokesman for Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan, the Chicago Democrat who also controls the state party.

“All of the limitations and different ideas sound good until you say, ‘What happens when a decent candidate is subject to attack?’ That argues against major change in the guise of reform,” Brown says. He adds: “Is Michael Madigan open to discussion? Sure.”

Maybe everybody has finally had enough. Murnane says he plans to reach out to state lawmakers this year to revive a concept he introduced in 2008: sort of a mix of merit selection and nonpartisan elections.

Under his plan, an eight-member bipartisan commission appointed by legislative leaders would screen Supreme Court candidates for nonpartisan elections. Each judicial district would have a panel composed equally of lawyers and nonlawyers, and it would take six of eight votes — and bipartisan cooperation — to green light a candidacy. Nonapproved judicial candidates could get on the ballot through nominating petitions, but their names wouldn’t have the commission’s endorsement on the ballot, Murnane suggests.

“We will continue to elect judges, but let’s elect judges that have a little bit better track record or a little bit better evaluation,” he says. “I think there’s an appetite for change. I’m not sure there’s an appetite for this kind of a change just yet.”

Cummins, the ISBA representative who assailed the anti-Kilbride ads, says he’s intrigued by the concept.

“It would be interesting to see if Murnane and his group would be willing to talk with others. I’ve got to believe he’d find some seriously positive response, at least among the Bar leaders. It’d be a great first step.” □

Mike Ramsey is a Chicago-based free-lance writer.

Rockford's Rosies

World War II put Illinois women to work

by Beverley Scobell

For women of the Greatest Generation — newsman Tom Brokaw's term for those who served in World War II — the war brought empowerment. When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, the federal government called America's men to serve abroad and its women to keep the war machine humming on the home front. Those women — whose life choices mostly were limited to a few "feminine" occupations such as teacher, nurse, homemaker, and perhaps secretary or retail clerk — began working in factories, assembling everything from airplanes to

bombs. They were instantly aware that their contributions served their men and their nation. But the government's encouragement to cross the line into "men's jobs" opened a new world of possibilities that many carried with them after the war.

Soldiers in faraway, often dangerous and uncomfortable places understood and appreciated those Rosie the Riveters, made iconic by Norman Rockwell in the *Saturday Evening Post*. But an Army corporal serving in France was prompted by a photograph in a Detroit paper sent to a fellow soldier to write to one of the young women

identified as attending Rockford College, a small liberal arts school for women south of the Wisconsin border. He and his buddies wondered what, if anything, those presumably advantageous, pampered girls were doing to help the war effort:

"The gist of the discussion was how fortunate you are as a girl, to be going to school, and continuing your normal life with minor unpleasantness, in spite of the war. Of course, no one felt you should endure any undue hardships, but some men were wondering what you are contributing to the war effort and eventual victory."

Photographs courtesy of the Library of Congress



During the war, Illinoisan Dorothy Cole converted her basement into a workshop to tin-plate needles.

There is no record of any answer to the soldiers' inquiry. However, nearly seven decades later, three Rockford College professors have compiled an impressive list of contributions by both students and faculty during the war years in their book, *We Are a College at War: Women Working for Victory in World War II* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2010). Mary Weeks-Baxter, Christine Bruun and Catherine Forslund argue that Rockford College represented a microcosm of home-front activism. Broader yet, the authors contend that those young women of the war years were a crucial link in the expansion of women's rights. They were daughters of those who fought for suffrage — the right to vote — and mothers of daughters — and sons — who fought for economic equality in the feminist movement of the 1970s.

World War II was the first war fought after American women received the right to vote, and more American women contributed to the war effort than ever before or since. "While large numbers of women received payment for their work during the war, even larger numbers worked as volunteers. If controlling money is a mark of gender freedom, so, too, was caregiving a way for women to assert their independence, reaffirm their significance in society and align themselves in roles that

could shape the outcome of the war," the authors say.

Rockford College's guiding philosophy of "active caregiving," along with a firm belief in the value of women's leadership and the importance of women's contributions to their communities, gained strength with the social activism of one of its alumnae, Jane Addams. Her work at Hull-House in Chicago, meeting the needs of the community on many fronts, demonstrated an underlying principle for the school's graduates that "a heartfelt empathy for others made a shared democracy a reasonable mechanism by which diverse groups could be included."

During the war years, Rockford College students volunteered in many jobs: USO clubs (the Army's Camp Grant was located near Rockford), day care centers for the growing number of women working in factories, Red Cross centers and civil defense offices. They also planted victory gardens and collected money to buy War Bonds.

Some of them also worked in a factory through a program initiated by Rockford College. The Earn and Learn program, the first of its kind in the nation, gave students a way to support the war effort and help pay for their education. Students attended class for three days a week and worked three days a week at Woodward Governor,

a local company that produced governors, an essential part in controlling the pitch of an airplane propeller. The component was also used in battleships, cruisers, destroyers, PT boats and submarines.

For others, including faculty, staff and graduates, the call to service meant joining the military. Congress established a women's branch of the Army in 1942, and by January 1943, all branches of the U.S. military had inducted women into their ranks. Ultimately, about 350,000 women, including nurses, provided backup support during the war, enabling more men to enter combat. Today, more than 200,000 of the nation's 1.47 million soldiers are women, many of them serving in dangerous jobs in Iraq and Afghanistan, according to the U.S. Department of Defense.

Following the end of World War II, Rockford College women, along with women across the country, entered a new reality. As servicemen came home to reclaim jobs, say Weeks-Baxter, Bruun and Forslund, women "were increasingly pushed out of the workplace and back into traditionally female occupations and roles." However, Jean Bethke Elshtain, professor of social and political ethics at the University of Chicago, wrote in her book, *Women and War*, that the "ideal of postwar domesticity" evolved not because women were "crudely coerced *en masse* to



Eva Hertzberg and Elve Burnham entered war work after their husbands joined the Navy. They assemble bands for blood transfusion bottles at Baxter Laboratories in Glenview. The photograph was taken in October 1942.

‘return’ to the home.” Rather, most American women of the time had never left the home, and those who had still valued “domestic dreams.” The Rockford College professors agree and write that the “ideal of civic housekeeping or social feminism in many ways already prepared women for this retreat back into the home.”

The new Google tool, Ngram, which makes available datasets of more than 500 billion words from 5.2 million books in six languages, shows the progress of the women’s movement in graphic form when the words “men” and “women” are searched. Beginning in 1800, the graphic line showing mention of women in books runs at about a 1-to-7 ratio to men. The line gains some momentum in the 1920s, closing the gap, and then levels off until the 1960s. Use of “women” climbs steeply to a point in the early 1980s, when the line meets, then surpasses the line showing “men” in books. “Women” reaches a high point in the late 1990s.

The graphic line follows American history. A generation after World War II, women started to challenge norms, wanting more from the workplace outside

the home. *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan appeared in 1963, and the Civil Rights Act was passed in 1964. By the early 1970s, the feminist movement was more organized and more vocal.

Illinois, the first state east of the Mississippi River to give women the vote in 1913, became the focal point of both proponents and opponents in the fight for the 1972 Equal Rights Amendment. With time running out, Illinois was the only northern industrial state that had not ratified the amendment.

Supporters believed that passage in Illinois would ensure ratification, and the proposed language — “Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex” — would become the 27th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. However, in 1982, it was defeated in the Illinois General Assembly when then-House Speaker George Ryan required more than a simple majority to pass it.

Yet, this state produced Hillary Rodham Clinton, who was born in Chicago and raised in Park Ridge. Standing on the shoulders of all those who fought for

women’s equality, she nearly became the Democratic nominee for president. But Illinois also claims Barack Obama, who won the job, and, in 2009, carried on the fight by signing the Lilly Ledbetter Equal Pay Act to once again address the fact of unfair compensation, comparing men with women, in the workplace.

“Addams believed that inclusion and fairness were essential for those who needed care and who needed to have a voice,” write the Rockford College professors, “and it took a collective effort to make these possible. The young women studying at Rockford College during World War II heard the message begun by Addams ... as they responded to student refugees in need, as they helped rebuild shattered post-war Europe, and as they later went to work for equity through the ERA and the Equal Pay Act.”

The efforts of those few “fortunate” girls at Rockford College during the war years were practiced nationwide. Their message of fairness and respect reverberated through the next generation and, as the authors say, “continues to generate momentum.” □

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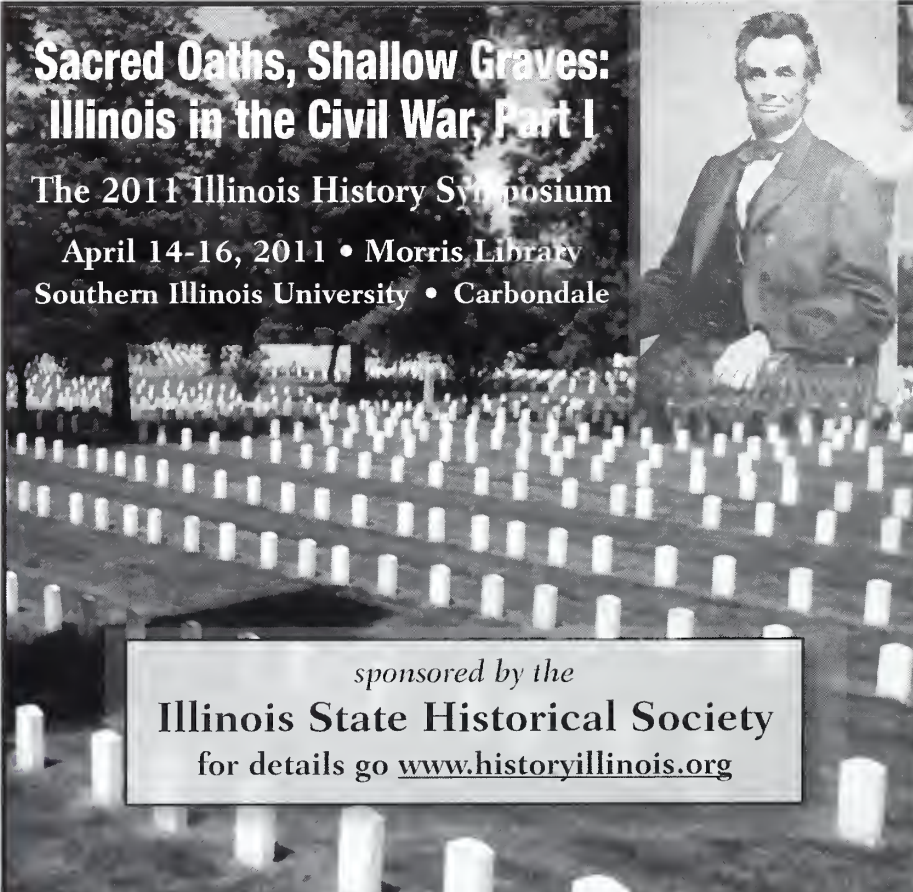
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Foreclosure crisis

Huge number of foreclosures has made the system a mess,
and it could get worse

by Jamey Dunn

Virginia Holwell doesn't know how she is going to keep the Peoria Heights house she has called home for the past 10 years. Holwell worked for the state of Illinois for more than 30 years, as a social worker and then training and supervising social workers. After she was laid off last July, she began having trouble

paying her bills. Before she missed a payment, she tried to renegotiate the terms of her mortgage to possibly get a lower interest rate or smaller payments to bridge the time until she found another job. She got some help from her friend, Dawn Dannenbring, an organizer at the community advocacy group Illinois People's

Action. "Without assistance, I don't think people could do this process themselves. ... It's not a language normal people speak," Holwell says.

She recounts having to send in the same forms over and over to her bank because copies were lost or mishandled. She once received a letter seven days after the date on it, which meant she only had a week to respond. In the end, she couldn't reach a deal, even though she says she was never late with a payment. "They said, 'You don't make enough money [for new terms on a loan].'" She says with a laugh that she told them, "That's why I'm coming here." The last she heard from the bank, she was told to sell her home. "The bureaucracy — it's frustrating when you work in one. But when you have to be beholden to one, it's even worse."

Many Illinoisans faced with potential foreclosure are confronted with similar uncertainty and frustration as they deal with a bureaucratic system that was unprepared for such numbers.

Loan industry shortfalls, among them a process called robo-signing, have resulted, in part, from an overwhelming number of Illinoisans losing their homes. Such questionable practices are now undermining efforts to keep people in their houses under renegotiated loans. The failures in the system affect not just the homeowners but Illinois banks, investors — including the state's employee pension funds — and the sluggish housing market, which experts



say is dragging down the economy in Illinois and nationwide.

The problem arose in companies known as mortgage servicers, which collect homeowners' payments. Lenders bundled mortgages and sold them off to investors. Investors then hired other companies to handle the collection of payments or a foreclosure if the debtor can no longer pay. JPMorgan Chase, Bank of America, Wells Fargo, Citigroup and what was once GMAC, now known as Ally Financial, service more than half of mortgages nationwide. Many homeowners are not aware that it is often a servicer, and not their bank, making important decisions such as potentially renegotiating their loans.

As more and more homeowners defaulted on their loans, servicers went from the fairly simple task of collecting payments to the more demanding process of foreclosure. And on the whole, the biggest servicers in the industry began applying sloppy practices.

Companies servicing mortgages are tasked with protecting the interests of their investors, who get a cut of the payments. Sometimes, it is best for everyone involved if the terms of a loan can be renegotiated — a practice referred to as a loan modification — so borrowers can stay in their homes and investors can continue to receive payments, even if the checks coming in are smaller. Since the housing market has deteriorated, the alternative is often leaving homes to sit vacant because property values have dropped or there are no potential buyers.

However, those closest to the process say dealing with servicers overwhelmed with foreclosures is beyond challenging. "For many, many, many people ... it's just like pulling teeth. It's like pulling a full set of teeth, including the wisdom teeth, to move these things through," says Dan Lindsey, a supervisory attorney with the Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago, who tries to help borrowers stay in their homes through the federal Home Affordable Modification Program. He says of the servicers: "They don't have the staffing and the person power and the will power. ... [Negotiating loan modifications can be] so complicated; it's many times easier just to say no."

Lindsey says he has seen several cases where a homeowner has had the relief of being told he or she can work out new

terms on a loan only to receive notice later that plans are in the works to sell the home. In most cases, it's miscommunication because the servicing company hasn't stopped the process of foreclosure while working on a loan modification, but it is indicative of the chronic lack of organization in the system. "It's two different tentacles of the octopus not communicating with each other. Except the octopus has about 1,000 tentacles," he says.

Service companies have little monetary incentive to keep borrowers in their homes because they collect fees from investors either way. "They have figured out every single legal thing that they can charge to make money... and because they don't have skin in the game, they don't have the incentive to work it out," says Dannenbring, who has helped Illinoisans facing foreclosure for the last three years as an organizer and before that as a volunteer.

When home values drop, some servicers just walk away from them, creating community blight and confusion over who is responsible for the property. A recent study shows that in Chicago, that happens most frequently in low-income communities that have already taken a serious blow in the recent recession.

Servicers are responsible for upkeep on vacant homes until they can be resold. That can become costly while houses sit on the market, so some companies abandon the properties before completing the foreclosure process. That creates a problem for city officials when there are code violations or crimes at a vacant property, with no clear way to contact the owner about the problem. It also creates potential dangers for residents in neighborhoods that are often already high-crime areas.

"Servicers see in certain really distressed communities the property values have declined. ... They're just trying to find a way to cut their losses," says Geoff Smith, one of the authors of a study on vacant homes in Chicago conducted by the Chicago-based Woodstock Institute.

Deborah Hagan, chief of the Consumer Protection Division under Attorney General Lisa Madigan, says lenders targeted minority and elderly homeowners in Chicago with telemarketing, often persuading them to refinance their homes on very unfavorable terms. In some cases, borrowers were eligible for better loans. "Certain groups were targeted; African-

Americans and Latinos had proportionally more bad loans than whites, and more expensive loans. ... I think there were a lot of bad loans written, and they were targeted to people in certain communities."

Brent Adams, secretary of the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation, agrees that the initial predatory practices of lenders share a large part of the blame for the current crisis. "Several years ago, there was just this flurry of mortgages being issued. ... We have seen this pile of mortgages work its way through the system and essentially create havoc at every step," Adams says. (For a comprehensive look at the housing crisis see *Illinois Issues*, June 2009, page 16.)

Nationally, foreclosure numbers hit their peak last September, spiking at more than 100,000 for the month. About the same time, news outlets began reporting that in some cases, foreclosure documents were not up to snuff. Employees have admitted under oath to signing off on hundreds of foreclosure files a day without verifying important information, such as how much



borrowers owed. This rushed process has come to be known as robo-signing.

"The nation's overburdened foreclosure system is riddled with faked documents, forged signatures and lenders who take shortcuts reviewing borrower's files, according to court documents and interviews with attorneys, housing advocates and company officials," the *Washington Post* reported on September 23.

Before the housing crisis, foreclosures typically represented a small part of servicers' business. However, in 2010, Illinois saw 151,304 foreclosure filings, and had the ninth-highest rate of foreclosures in the nation and the fourth-highest total number, according to RealtyTrac, a firm that specializes in foreclosure sales and tracks national statistics.

"Thus, as the boom in the housing market mutated into a boom in foreclosures, banks rushed to move delinquent borrowers out of their homes as quickly as possible, leading, apparently, to procedures of which the best that can be said is that they were sloppy and cursory," said a November report of the Congressional Oversight Panel, which reviews foreclosures.

In mid-September, GMAC temporarily halted evictions and foreclosure sales across the country. Several other servicers followed suit with temporary freezes on parts of the process, such as evictions and sales of seized properties.

Servicers and banks characterized the problem as simple clerical errors that could be cleared up after review and prevented in the future with tweaks to internal policy. A written statement from GMAC described the problems as "procedural error ... in certain affidavits" and also said, "We are confident that the processing errors did not result in any inappropriate foreclosures."

The Congressional Oversight Panel spelled out the potential consequences of robo-signing in its report. "In the best-case scenario, concerns about mortgage documentation irregularities may prove overblown. In this view, which has been embraced by the financial industry, a handful of employees failed to follow procedures in signing foreclosure-related affidavits, but the facts underlying the affidavits are demonstrably accurate. Foreclosures could proceed as soon as the invalid affidavits are replaced with properly executed paperwork."

The report goes on to describe a far more devastating potential course of events. "The worst-case scenario is considerably grimmer. In this view, which has been articulated by academics and homeowner advocates, the 'robo-signing' of affidavits served to cover up the fact that loan servicers cannot demonstrate the facts required to conduct a lawful foreclosure. In essence, banks may be unable to prove that they own the mortgage loans they claim to own. If documentation problems prove to be pervasive and, more importantly, throw into doubt the ownership of not only foreclosed properties but also pooled mortgages, the consequences could be severe. Clear and uncontested property rights are the foundation of the housing market. If these rights fall into question, that foundation could collapse." The panel also warned that banks could be open to potential lawsuits from homeowners who were mistakenly targeted for foreclosure or subjected to an improper administration of the process.

Illinois pension dollars, as well as pension funds from several other states across the country, are invested in banks tied to the controversy. In early January, the directors of the Illinois State Board of Investments and the Illinois State University Retirement System — along with administrators of pension funds in Connecticut, New York, Oregon and North Carolina — sent letters to Bank of America, JPMorgan Chase, Wells Fargo and Citigroup demanding that the banks conduct an external audit of their foreclosure procedures.

"As shareholders ... we want these banks to be able to show us that they have aggressively and adequately internally reviewed their processes. ... They have fiduciary responsibility [to their shareholders]. So we're basically calling them on that," says William Atwood, executive director of the Illinois State Board of Investments.

Adams says, "We certainly have seen it affect our state's financial institutions." Last year, Illinois had the third-highest number of failed banks among the states.

As Illinois embarks on what Hagan says will likely be the worst year yet for foreclosures, federal and state regulators, including Madigan, are launching investigations and looking to sort out the mess. The state Department of Financial and

The panel also warned that banks could be open to potential lawsuits from homeowners who were mistakenly targeted for foreclosure or subjected to an improper administration of the process.

Professional Regulation issued a nine-point plan to improve the paperwork process. Adams and Hagan say national standards for servicers are under discussion. "Many of the companies state that they would prefer a ... national set of requirements," says Adams. Madigan is working with the attorneys general of the other 49 states, as well as state and federal regulators, to negotiate separate settlements with the top five national servicers. "The main discussion that we've been having with them was what were their problems ... because all of those banks have admitted in one way or another that they had some problems," says Hagan.

Adams says the need for intervention has grown now that servicers have lifted their self-imposed foreclosure freezes. "We are proceeding and prepared for it to get worse," He says. "Time is of the essence in this matter. ... People are being foreclosed on now."

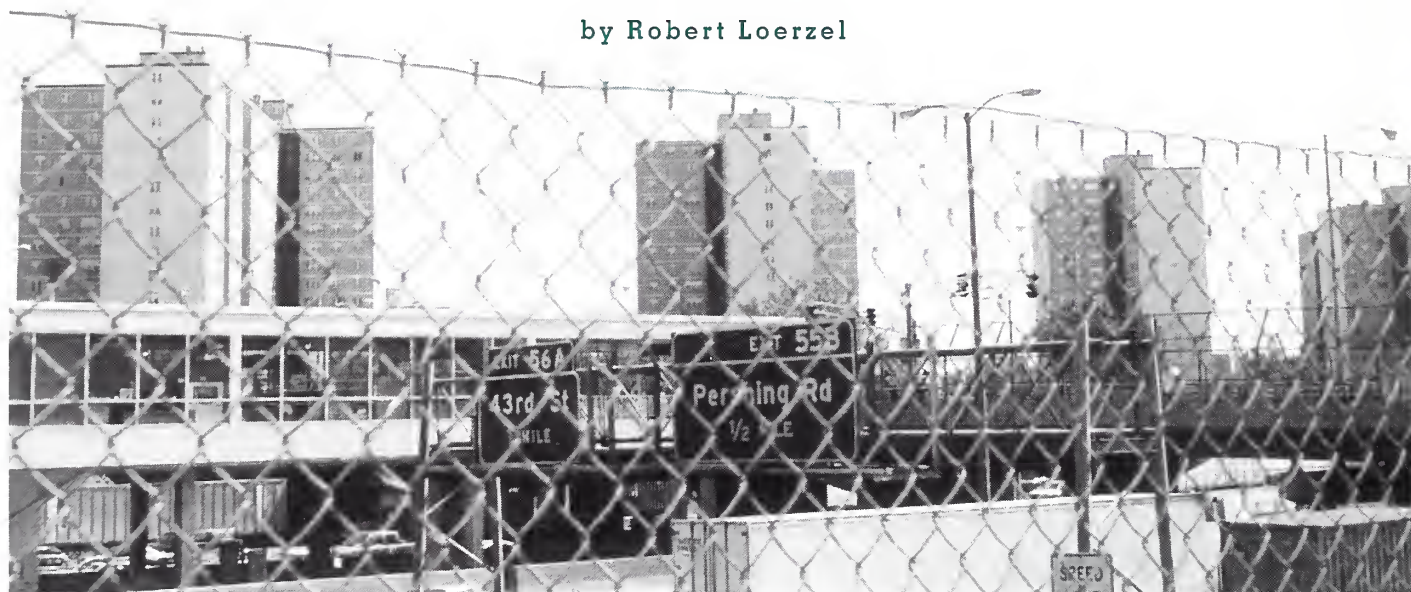
Dannenbring says the settlement will only be meaningful if it requires servicers to work harder on loan modifications. "Our big push is for a real settlement. The banks are used to paying money. It can't just be a fine." She says people such as her friend Holwell, who have never missed a payment but find themselves out of a job because of the recession and unable to get new terms on their loans, will be the next wave of homeowners being foreclosed upon in 2011.

Holwell has no plans to sell her home. She has some jewelry she can sell to bring in cash as she continues to look for work. And if she can't find any, she says she will "figure out a way to get rid of one bill — like food." □

Almost there

The Chicago Housing Authority moves toward correcting the city's 'biggest-ever civic mistake'

by Robert Loerzel



The old Stateway Gardens housing complex on Chicago's South Side

On a frigid morning in early December, the last tenants moved out of the last remaining high-rise at Cabrini-Green, ordered by a judge to leave. It was one of Chicago's most notorious public housing projects, but to Annie Ricks and four of her children, it was home. "It's good to me," she said.

News crews watched as a moving van hauled off Ricks' belongings to another Chicago Housing Authority apartment, at Wentworth Gardens on the South Side. "I was the last woman standing," Ricks told the television cameras.

After the Ricks family departed on December 9, a few journalists and filmmakers lingered outside the dingy gray Cabrini tower in Chicago's Near North Side neighborhood, near the corner of Division and Halsted streets. Another one of Cabrini's empty high-rises was still standing in the distance, with debris and

tangled metal exposed on one side and wrecking cranes parked nearby.

"They got what they wanted, but I hope they can sleep easy tonight," said an angry Marvin Edwards, 42, who had lived in Cabrini for most of his life until moving out last summer. Edwards questioned why the high-rises needed to come down, insisting they were structurally sound buildings. And he said Cabrini was a tight-knit community, in spite of its history of problems with crime. Edwards accused the CHA of clearing away the buildings "to appease the yuppies."

A few minutes later, the remaining photographers approached the high-rise's front door to see if they could get one last look inside the building. CHA spokeswoman Kellie O'Connell-Miller stepped out through the door and said no one would be admitted. "We're closing the building for good at noon," she said. "It's over."

It was a historic moment for Chicago.

Eleven years earlier, Mayor Richard M. Daley had announced an ambitious plan to fix Chicago's public housing, which was widely regarded as a disaster — the city's "biggest-ever civic mistake," according to a 2000 editorial in the *Chicago Tribune*.

With a \$1.5 billion commitment from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, Daley planned to tear down 51 CHA high-rises, following earlier demolitions in the 1990s. And where would the people who lived in these high-rises go? The CHA vowed to build or rehab 25,000 units of housing, while Section 8 vouchers would help some CHA tenants pay the rent at privately owned apartments scattered throughout the city.

"This is a huge task," Daley said at the time. "It won't happen overnight. There are no miracles. It will take years to complete."



Oakwood Shores on the South Side was constructed beginning in 2003 and replaced the Ida B. Wells and Madden Park homes.

The CHA's "Plan for Transformation" has indeed taken years. Although it was slated to be finished in 2010, the CHA extended it an additional five years, setting a new projected completion date of 2015. The high-rises have come down, and the CHA is 81 percent of the way toward its goal of building or rehabbing 25,000 homes.

"From the brick-and-mortar perspective, I think we're doing well," says Chicago Housing Authority CEO Lewis Jordan, who spoke in an interview in January.

Rehabbing is practically complete on senior housing and scattered-site housing. Meanwhile, the CHA is three-fourths done with rehab work on its family units, having finished 3,779.

But much work remains to be done on mixed-income developments — one of the cornerstones of Daley's plan in 1999. The idea was to stop isolating the poor in government-constructed skyscrapers. Instead, private developers would build complexes of condos and apartments on CHA land, where the poor would live alongside middle-class homeowners. One-third of the units would be sold at market rate. Another third would be affordable housing, which residents could buy with low-income tax credits. And the other third would be for CHA residents, with the government helping them to pay their rent.

But at the end of 2010, the CHA's plans to build public-housing units in mixed-income developments were only 39 per-

cent complete. A little more than 3,000 units had been constructed in developments, such as Parkside of Old Town, near the old Cabrini-Green towers.

"I'll show you this gem called Parkside," says Jordan. "And I'd dare you to tell me which part of it's public housing, and which part is market-rate." Jordan points out the businesses that have opened in the neighborhood, including a Dominick's grocery store and a Starbucks. "Those are the kinds of things that happen as a result of having better housing stock," he says.

However, condo sales slowed during the weak economy of the last few years. And so did the CHA's building plans. Jordan says the CHA didn't want to put up more public-housing and affordable-housing units without the corresponding number of market-rate units. That would throw off the ratio — defeating the whole idea of mixed-income neighborhoods.

"By 2015, will we have all of these mixed-income developments done?" Jordan says. "No."

Instead, the CHA is using other sorts of housing to reach its goal of 25,000 units. The agency is working with landlords throughout the city to lock in certain apartments as places where CHA residents can live for years to come. As Jordan explains, it's "a unit here, a unit there, five units here, five units there — being very, very careful not to concentrate." In addition, the CHA has purchased 16 foreclosed or aban-

doned houses, with plans to buy 200 more during the next four years.

One question that remains unsettled is what the CHA plans to do with hundreds of row houses that need renovations, including those at Cabrini-Green.

The CHA houses more than 100,000 people, with about 9,000 apartments for seniors and nearly 9,000 apartments for families. The CHA also administers 31,000 Housing Choice Vouchers, enabling low-income families to rent apartments in the private market.

"We're the largest landlord in the city of Chicago," Jordan says.

The Plan for Transformation has brought some praise to the CHA, but the agency — which had a troubled history for decades — is hardly immune from criticism.

Author Alex Kotlowitz, who chronicled the woes of the West Side's Henry Horner Homes in his 1991 book, *There Are No Children Here*, says it was obvious that the high-rises had to go.

"They were built on the cheap," he says. "They added to the segregation of the city. They became these warehouses of the very poor. And they were neglected over the years. They weren't built with really thoughtful designs, and then they were just left to rot."

The high-rises were doomed to failure because they concentrated so many children in such a small area, according to D. Bradford Hunt, author of the 2009 book, *Blueprint for Disaster: The Unraveling of Chicago Public Housing*. Hunt, a dean and associate professor of political science at Roosevelt University, says the high ratio of children to adults created an environment where disorder was almost bound to flourish.

Kotlowitz says the CHA demolished high-rises faster than it found new places where the poor could live. "They did it rather quickly, without building all of the replacement housing."

As people moved out of high-rises such as the Robert Taylor Homes on the South Side, some of them stayed within the CHA system. But others scattered, and exactly where they ended up has become a matter of some debate.

"The CHA, at least in that early couple of years, didn't do a very good job of keeping track of where everybody was going," Kotlowitz says. "One thing that I think is

clear is that a large number of people ended up in equally troubled neighborhoods or suburbs."

About half of the 26,000 families that lived in the CHA system in 1999 are still part of the CHA. Those families have a "right of return," allowing them to move into new units if they meet certain requirements, such as showing they've been keeping up with their rent. The CHA also added a work requirement in 2008.

But what about the other 13,000 or so families who lived in the CHA in 1999? "We know little about how that other half now lives," wrote Lawrence J. Vale and Erin Graves of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in a report last year for the MacArthur Foundation.

The CHA has been unable to contact about 2,900 of those families.

"There are some people who haven't been responsive to any of our outreach attempts at all," says O'Connell-Miller, who is the CHA's director of research, reporting and communications.

"Some of those people might not be interested in coming back."

CHA residents who moved into apartments using Section 8 vouchers have faced many challenges, according to Mary C. Johns, editor-in-chief of *Residents' Journal*, a Chicago publication that reports on public housing.

"A lot of people have moved into problems similar to those in public housing — high crime and so forth — or even worse conditions," Johns says.

Johns moved into the CHA's Madden Park Homes on the South Side in 1989, when she was a single mother with five children. "Horrible living conditions," she says. "I was shocked because I'd always lived in the private market. I fell on hard times. ... I used to wonder, 'Why are people selling drugs right here and there's a security guard?' I almost got killed because I went up to the gangs one day — these outsiders, a lot of them didn't even live in the complex."

In 2002, when the demolition of Madden Park was looming, Johns moved into one of the CHA's scattered-site buildings, a three-flat in the trendy West Town neighborhood on the North Side. She still lives there with one son who's still at home but preparing to enter college. Johns complains that her building isn't well-designed or well-constructed. She



*The Henry Horner Homes project on Chicago's west side was the setting of Alex Kotlowitz's 1991 book, **There Are No Children Here**.*

says the noise from the adjacent apartments is so loud in her bedroom that it sounds like the neighbors are in the room with her.

But she adds: "I like the neighborhood. It's a lot of condos. Some people don't know I'm a public housing resident." Johns laughs. "At some point, I'm going to quiz them. I'm going to go interview people and say, 'What would you think if someone came over here from public housing?'"

In the mixed-income developments, poor CHA tenants don't mingle much with the middle-class condo owners, Johns says. She says she hears often about tensions between the classes in these neighborhoods. Wealthier homeowners complain about the poorer tenants making noise, for example.

"There isn't as much social interaction as we had hoped," Hunt says. "The idea that everybody should live together is patronizing. It says: 'What poor people really need is somebody with money and a job living next to them.' Probably not. That's probably not their No. 1 problem."

Asked about those tensions, Jordan says: "There was never an intended 'Kumbaya.' I think the intent was for people to coexist socially."

And he says there are success stories. Residents bond at a community garden at the Villages of West Haven, a mixed-

income development at the site of the old Henry Horner Homes.

"When you're doing stuff like that, when you're digging holes and planting flowers and pulling up tomatoes, no one looks at you and says, 'Are you low-income or are you market-rate?'" Jordan says.

Over the decades, the CHA has faced criticism for reinforcing Chicago's racial segregation. The landmark lawsuit *Gautreaux v. Chicago Housing Authority*, filed in 1966, required the CHA to put more public housing at scattered sites rather than confining it to poor black areas.

Eventually, a court placed the CHA in receivership, with the Habitat Company directing all land development. "What the original order said was: CHA was not doing a good job complying with the *Gautreaux* order in locating housing and developing housing in low-poverty areas and mixed-race areas," O'Connell-Miller says.

That arrangement lasted 23 years, until last May, when U.S. District Court Judge Marvin Aspen ruled that the CHA could finally be trusted to come out of receivership. The Habitat Company will continue to work with the CHA during a three-year transition period.

But has the Plan for Transformation made any dents in the city's racial segregation?



West Haven Park Tower, a mixed-income complex, replaced Henry Horner.

“Despite relocation, many residents remain in racially segregated neighborhoods,” Vale and Graves wrote in their MacArthur Foundation report. “The Plan for Transformation has not led to racial deconcentration.”

Jordan says minority residents in the CHA can use vouchers to rent apartments in all parts of Chicago, thanks to the Fair Housing Act.

“When people move out, most people move relatively close to where they originally lived,” he says. “I think that’s a comfort level. Now we have a process we call mobility counseling, where we sit down with the families and say: ‘Hey, you’ve always lived in this neighborhood. Have you ever thought about going north? Here are the potential job opportunities.’ Those are conversations that we have with families to help them, ultimately, to make the choice that they feel is best for their situation.”

Vale and Graves praised the CHA for making “impressive improvements” in counseling residents who are looking for a new place to live.

The Plan for Transformation has transformed the CHA as a bureaucracy, too.

“When I started here 15 years ago, we had almost 4,000 employees,” says Bill Velazquez, the CHA’s deputy director of intergovernmental affairs. “We have less than 500 today.”

The CHA has been getting out of the business of managing housing complexes, handing those functions over to private companies. “At the end of the day,” Jordan says, “we sign checks to XYZ company to make sure those properties are clean and safe.”

Today’s CHA emphasizes social programs to help its tenants with jobs, education and life skills. Jordan says the purpose of government public housing is to provide shelter — “one of the most basic needs to mankind.” But he doesn’t want

tenants to use the CHA forever. The system should be helping them improve their lives until they no longer need to live in public housing, he says. The ultimate goal, Jordan says, is for a tenant to tell the CHA: “Here are the keys. Help somebody else.”

On the whole, Hunt sees the Plan for Transformation as positive. While it has disrupted the lives of some CHA residents who would have preferred to stay where they were, it hasn’t been as chaotic as feared.

“There was a lot of fear in 2000, this idea that we were going to tear down public housing and move everybody out,” he says. “Homelessness was going to erupt. There were going to be the equivalent of riots. There was no way you could do this. And yet, [the plan] happened — not flawlessly by any stretch. There have been a lot of problems. But the sky didn’t fall.” □

Robert Loerzel is a Chicago-based freelance writer.



The ethanol debate

Some contend boosting the ratio at gasoline pumps is folly, but others say it's good for America and the environment

Photograph courtesy of the Illinois Corn Growers Association and Adkins Energy

by Michael Hawthorne

With fuel demand still down from the recession, ethanol producers have found their markets nearly saturated. Even though Congress required refiners to use at least 15 billion gallons of ethanol and other biofuels by 2012, energy forecasters predicted the country wouldn't be able to use all of it, at least at the maximum allowable blend of gasoline with 10 percent ethanol.

Limiting producers to the blend, known as E10, threatened to put a big crimp on agribusiness interests with a financial stake in the nation's annual corn crop, of which a third of the 14.2 billion bushels is used to make ethanol.

"There hasn't been the same incentive to invest," says David Loos, director of research and business development for the Illinois Corn Growers Association.

The solution, at least as far as the farm lobby sees it, is to boost the amount of ethanol required in conventional gasoline. Nearly two years ago, Growth Ener-

gy, an industry trade group, petitioned the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to increase the so-called blend wall, allowing concentrations of the corn-based fuel to bump up to 15 percent.

Before the EPA conditionally granted the request in October, it prompted an intense lobbying effort and created some unusual political alliances. On one hand, ethanol interests blanketed the airwaves with commercials touting the home-grown biofuel as the only way to wean the United States from its addiction to imported oil. Growth Energy even cited the Deepwater Horizon disaster in the Gulf of Mexico to promote its product. "No beaches have been closed due to ethanol spills," proclaimed ads posted in Washington, D.C., transit stations. The group also claimed that adding more ethanol to gasoline would help create more than 130,000 jobs nationwide.

Oil companies, which already loathed

the idea of losing 10 percent of their market to ethanol, lined up against the E15 proposal with livestock producers, automakers, environmental groups, small equipment manufacturers and chain restaurants on their side. Car companies in particular are concerned that higher ethanol blends can corrode the engines of older vehicles. Livestock farmers and restaurant lobbyists contend the ethanol boom is driving up food prices by making corn more expensive. And green groups warn that the environmental benefits touted by ethanol interests are a mirage when the full impact of growing corn for fuel is considered.

"This is really agricultural policy masquerading as energy policy," says Craig Cox, a former undersecretary for natural resources at the U.S. Department of Agriculture who now works for the Environmental Working Group, a non-profit that is sharply critical of ethanol subsidies.

Ethanol interests won again when the EPA decided in early January to extend the E15 blend for cars made since 2001, a move that would clear the way for the fuel to be used in about 60 percent of the vehicles on the road today.

The industry's political allies in the White House and Congress also extended a 45-cent-a-gallon tax credit for ethanol blenders and a 54-cent tariff on imported ethanol that largely has kept overseas competitors out of the market. Both of the measures were set to expire at the end of last year. Corn Belt senators outlined their position in a letter circulated after a bipartisan group of their colleagues called for an end to the subsidies: "This is not the time to reduce the supply of a domestic source of fuel and place at greater risk the thousands of well-paying jobs that the renewable fuels industry has created," the senators wrote.

Opponents, in particular Republicans from states outside the Midwest, say allowing the subsidies to expire would show the GOP is committed to cutting federal spending. Taxpayers spent \$22 billion on ethanol tax breaks between 2005 and 2010, according to the Environmental Working Group. They will pay an additional \$31 billion if the tax credit is extended to 2015.

"We've got to take on the sacred cows," Sen. John McCain of Arizona, the GOP candidate for president in 2008, said in late January on CBS News' *Face the Nation*. "Ethanol is a joke."

The debate highlights the controversial methods the federal government has employed since the late 1970s to create markets for corn-based ethanol.

Using it to fuel cars isn't new — during the early part of the last century, Henry Ford designed his Model T to run on ethanol as well as gasoline — but its more modern use can be traced in part to the lobbying prowess of Decatur-based Archer Daniels Midland, the nation's largest ethanol producer.

With the nation still recoiling from OPEC oil embargos in the 1970s, the agribusiness giant was instrumental in creating the tax incentives for ethanol production and tariffs to block imported ethanol. Historically, ADM has been one of the biggest financial contributors to federal candidates (ADM has given more than \$3.8 million since 2000, according

to the Center for Responsive Politics). The company also played a key role in securing provisions in the 2007 energy bill requiring greater use of ethanol. The mandate swells to 36 billion gallons by 2022, a dramatic increase from the 1.6 billion produced in 2000.

Government ethanol policies have been good for ADM's bottom line and more recently have helped keep corn prices high. As a result, many grain farmers ended up seeing record incomes last year. And many proudly note they are replacing at least a portion of the nation's imported oil with fuel derived from crops grown in Illinois and other Corn Belt states.

"I'm not sure corn ethanol is the long-term solution," says Paul Taylor, a DeKalb County farmer who plants most of his 1,000 acres in corn. "But it's a way to move us forward, and we've already got the infrastructure in place."

Indeed, there are now more than 200 ethanol plants in 26 states, most of which are designed to distill the fuel from corn. The industry's construction boom took off in 2007, when gasoline consumption hit a peak of 3.4 billion barrels and analysts predicted the nation would need far more ethanol to help meet future demand. Higher oil prices also made ethanol more competitive. Then the recession hit, oil prices dropped and gasoline demand plummeted. With other government policies requiring more fuel-efficient cars, forecasters have scaled back their once-ambitious consumption projections. But ethanol production continues to grow.

For some, the solution is to use more of the blend known as E85, which contains 85 percent ethanol and 15 percent gasoline.

"There are people who will buy nothing but E85," says Wallace Tyner, a Purdue University agricultural economist. "For them, it's patriotism."

The fuel is sold in special pumps at some gas stations, mostly in the Midwest, but most cars can't use it. And because vehicles go fewer miles on a gallon of E85 than of gasoline (ethanol packs about 78 percent of the energy of regular gas), on a per-gallon basis it generally is more expensive. Gasoline was selling on average in late January for \$3.10 a gallon, while E85 was selling for \$2.64 a gallon. When energy content is

factored into the equation, E85 was effectively 40 cents a gallon more expensive than gasoline, according to AAA.

Since E85 is still a niche market, the industry pushed hard to expand the blend wall to allow 15 percent ethanol in conventional gasoline. Yet most observers say it could take another two years before it shows up at the pump, a delay that reflects ongoing concerns about how higher ethanol blends could affect large and small engines, as well as gasoline pumps across the nation. Ethanol interests assembled studies, including some conducted by the U.S. Department of Energy and the state of Minnesota, that concluded E15 won't damage engines and will help curb air pollution. After a lengthy review, the EPA generally agreed with those conclusions.

Shortly before the November elections, the agency approved E15 for vehicles from the 2007 model year and later. Then it extended it for cars built since 2001.

"Recently completed testing and data analysis show that E15 does not harm emissions control equipment in newer cars and light trucks," EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson said when announcing the expanded blend wall. "Wherever sound science and the law support steps to allow more home-grown fuels in America's vehicles, this administration takes those steps."

However, oil refiners are balking at selling E15, and automakers and small engine manufacturers already have asked a federal appellate court to force the EPA to reconsider its decision. Moreover, most gas stations don't have equipment certified to sell the higher ethanol blend.

Opponents say making regular gasoline good for younger cars but bad for older ones would confuse the public and threaten to void car warranty claims. James Coan, a Rice University energy analyst, speculated in a recent blog post that if car owners mistakenly bought E15 for older vehicles, gas station owners could face a legal and public relations nightmare. The impact could be even greater for hundreds of millions of engines in smaller equipment like boats, chain saws and weed trimmers.

"I suppose the EPA could face so much political pressure that this will somehow work," Coan says in an interview. "But right now, it seems very impractical."

Some economists, meanwhile, argue the burgeoning corn-ethanol network gives the industry so much political clout that alternatives are being squeezed out of the market. Researchers say there is no way the nation can grow enough corn to supply the steadily increasing mandate for more ethanol.

With federal assistance, research labs are trying to figure out more effective ways to produce cellulosic ethanol made from nonedible organic matter such as plant waste or switch grass. The hope is that these crops will someday replace corn ethanol, but so far, few commercially scaled operations have managed to overcome refining challenges. One of the biggest hurdles is finding cost-effective methods to unlock energy from tougher, woodier plants than corn.

Once it works, the impact could be huge. A study by the U.S. departments of Energy and Agriculture estimates there is enough organic matter to produce 60 billion gallons of fuel annually without disrupting the food supply or straining the land. Biofuels would account for 40 percent of national fuel consumption as a result. Congress is nudging the science along with another mandate: By 2022, about 15 percent of the nation's fuel must come from cellulosic sources.

Some think moving to cellulosic ethanol also could help address lingering concerns about the impact of corn production on the environment.

Corn requires far more fertilizer and pesticides than alternative ethanol sources, according to the National Academy of Sciences.

The nation's most heavily used weed-killer, atrazine, is sprayed mostly on corn fields, and studies have suggested it might be more harmful to people than previously thought. While manufacturers and the EPA say it is safe, testing has shown that high levels of atrazine can linger in the environment during the growing season, making it one of the most commonly detected contaminants in drinking water.

Nitrogen and phosphorous runoff from the Corn Belt is a big contributor to a "dead zone" in the Gulf of Mexico that has sharply reduced populations of fish and other aquatic life. A 2008 study in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* estimated that boosting



corn production to meet the federal renewable fuels mandate could increase nitrogen pollution in the Gulf by up to 34 percent.

Then there are questions about how corn-based ethanol affects air pollution. Ethanol helps reduce some toxic chemicals in gasoline but increases others. While the industry touts studies showing that ethanol can reduce greenhouse-gas emissions linked to global climate change, other researchers are sharply skeptical of those claims. When fossil fuels burned to produce corn are considered, some scientists say, ethanol offers only a modest decline in heat-trapping pollution.

David Bullock, an agricultural economist at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, has summed up the debate as a struggle between economic interests in the Midwest and those in other parts of the country. In a 2009 paper, Bullock argued that the ethanol industry helps boost the price of farmland and bolsters investment in largely rural areas. But while government ethanol policies help create jobs in parts of the Midwest, he said, the initiatives can cause economic problems elsewhere. "By supporting the ethanol industry, are federal and state governments promoting a policy — indeed creating an entitlement — that will be later politically impossible to rescind?" Bullock wrote. With EPA's

recent E15 decision and the move to extend ethanol subsidies and tariffs, his prediction seems even more true today. □

Michael Hawthorne is the environment reporter for the Chicago Tribune.

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Obits

Samuel Gove

The last surviving founder of *Illinois Issues* and a ubiquitous figure on the Illinois government scene died on January 28. He was 87.

Gove, along with Illinois Constitutional Convention president Samuel Witwer and Paul Simon, who went on to become a United States senator, founded the magazine in 1975. Gove served as founding chairman and was a member of the *Illinois Issues* Advisory Board for 28 years.

He was director emeritus of the Institute of Government and Public Affairs at the University of Illinois and also founded the Illinois Legislative Staff Internship program, for which the magazine established a Hall of Fame in his name in 1990. The Hall of Fame includes among its inductees former Gov. Jim Edgar, Illinois Auditor General William Holland and former Illinois Congressman Terry Bruce.

Gove joined the IGPA as a research assistant in 1950 and became director in 1967.

A member of several commissions and advisory boards, Gove served on the Illinois Board of Higher Education. He also was a member of the transition teams for Govs. Dan Walker and Edgar.

"Sam was one of my mentors," Edgar said in a statement prepared by the IGPA. "If it hadn't been for Sam Gove, there may not have been a legislative intern program, and that was my entry [into public service]." Gove directed the internship program from 1962 until 1973.

Former *Illinois Issues* publisher Ed Wojcicki said: "I think one of the things that impressed me most about Sam was talking to people who had been interns of his. He was an icon to those people."

"Sam Gove, perhaps more than any other figure in Illinois than perhaps Jim Thompson, mentored more excellent state officials than anyone," says state Sen. Kirk Dillard, a Hinsdale Republican and Hall of Fame member. "I first met Sam Gove in 1977 when I was a member of the Legislative Staff Internship program. ... I got to know Professor Gove better when I served as Jim Edgar's chief of staff because Gov. Edgar viewed Sam as a



Samuel Gove

mentor, confidant and father figure. So Sam Gove was regularly sought for counsel and friendship by those of us in the Edgar administration — most importantly, Gov. Edgar himself."

"My whole career is based on my education as an intern under Sam in the late '60s. And for that, I will always be deeply grateful," says former intern and Hall of Fame member Jim Fletcher, a lobbyist who served as deputy governor and chief of staff under Gov. James Thompson. "Sam was one of the most important persons in Illinois government over these last 45-50 years. He not only brought great people to the state, but he initiated interest in Illinois that went far beyond his internship programs."

"He sort of was the embodiment of Illinois government," former Illinois legislator and comptroller Dawn Clark Netsch, a longtime friend, said in the IGPA statement. "He understood how all these pieces fit together [politically] but then always was involved in how it should work. He knew how to suggest things that would help to make it work better."

Kent Redfield, who directed the legislative internship program at the University of Illinois Springfield for about 20 years starting in 1979, says: "He was such a constant figure in all of the policy debates involving Illinois politics. It's such a loss. He was such a giant in terms of both state government and in linking the university to state government."

While director of IGPA, Gove served in

a variety of roles leading up to Illinois' 1970 Constitutional Convention.

"Sam was an institution in and around the state Capitol, where he was viewed by lawmakers as Mr. Good Government," Jim Nowlan, a longtime friend and colleague at IGPA, said in the release.

"I'm sure he suffered greatly because of all the miseries that were going on with Rod Blagojevich over the last few years in Illinois," says former *Illinois Issues* publisher Mike Lennon. "I'm sure he was deeply, deeply distressed by that. It went against everything he believed in."

Gove was a formative figure at *Illinois Issues*, giving guidance on story ideas, writers and issues that should be followed, especially in the magazine's early years, Lennon says. "He was indispensable. Sam had his eye on the big picture, the shape of Illinois politics. Many of the articles that appeared in *Illinois Issues* during its first 15 years had his fingerprints all over them. ... He also was a great fundraiser. He was always personally generous and always very good at helping to raise money."

Gove was the author of several books, including (with Gilbert Steiner) *Legislative Politics in Illinois*, "which was heralded by fellow political scientists as a path-breaking, dynamic analysis of the Illinois legislative process, a model for other scholars," Nowlan said.

Gove was also a member of the U of I faculty, beginning as research assistant professor in 1951 and becoming a full professor of political science in 1961. He was acting director and director of the university's master's degree program in public administration from 1987 to 1989.

Dillard says: "Sam was everything that you think a college professor should be. Wise. Tough. But kind. If God could chisel what would look like a college professor, Sam Gove would be that individual."

A native of Massachusetts, Gove received his bachelor's degree in economics from the University of Massachusetts in 1947 and earned a master's degree in political science from Syracuse University.

"When you think about Illinois state government, you think about Sam Gove," Netsch says.



Jack Thomas

New WIU president

Jack Thomas, provost and academic vice president at Western Illinois University, will become the university's president on July 1.

"After the on-campus interviews and meetings with each candidate, the board determined that Dr. Thomas was the candidate who would continue moving Western forward and build upon the excellence and accomplishments we've been fortunate to experience during the past 10 years," Michael Houston, chair of the WIU Board of Trustees, said in a prepared statement.

"We are so pleased to have Dr. Thomas serve as the 11th president of this great institution. He is a proven

leader and is a dedicated educator. Dr. Thomas is clearly aware of — and ready to tackle — the issues facing higher education," Houston added. "He has great enthusiasm and the motivation to continue Western's reputation for excellence."

The board set Thomas' annual salary at \$250,000, plus \$25,000 in a retirement annuity. He will succeed **Al Goldfarb**, who will retire June 30 after nearly 10 years as WIU's president.

Thomas said in the prepared statement, "I would like to thank the Board of Trustees for their confidence in me, the presidential search committee for their diligence and President Goldfarb, my fellow vice presidents and the University community for their support.

"I came to Western because I believed in its mission and vision. I believed in this institution's values and its commitment to students. If it had not been for public universities like Western, I would not be where I am today," Thomas said. "I know I have big shoes to fill. Dr. Goldfarb has done an excellent job in making sure Western is at the forefront, and I plan to continue to enhance the recognition of our great university."

Thomas has served as provost and academic vice president at Western since January 2008. "As president-elect, I plan to work with all constituencies to continue to move this outstanding institution forward as a leading university in Illinois and beyond the state's borders," Thomas said.

Before coming to Western, Thomas was the senior vice provost for academic affairs and professor of English at Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro. He also served as the vice provost for academic affairs and as the interim dean of the College of Continuing Education and Distance Learning at MTSU. Prior to joining the MTSU faculty, Thomas was a professor of English at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore in Princess Anne, Md., and director of the University of Maryland Eastern Shore Scholars Program. Thomas also served as interim president at Maryland Eastern Shore, as well as executive vice president, associate vice president for academic/student affairs, executive assistant to the president, chair of the department of English and modern languages, associate professor of English and coordinator of freshman English and assistant professor of English. Thomas also was the assistant track coach at Maryland Eastern Shore for eight years. He has taught English and coached at South Carolina State University and at Johnson C. Smith University.

He earned his doctorate in English literature and criticism from Indiana University of Pennsylvania; his master's degree from Virginia State University; and his bachelor's degree in English from Alabama A & M University. Thomas is also a 2005 graduate of the Harvard Institute for Management and Leadership Education program.

Appointments

Frances Carroll, a University of Illinois trustee who refused the governor's request to resign in the face of an admissions scandal, lost her seat on the board.

Gov. **Pat Quinn** said in mid-January Carroll would not be reappointed.

Carlos Tortolero, appointed in 2009, also did not get a new term.

The governor chose Chicagoan **Ricardo Estrada**, who had served on Quinn's Admissions Review Commission, and Chicago attorney **Patricia**

Brown Holmes, who had chaired the state's Cemetery Oversight Task Force. Quinn also reappointed **Karen Hasara**, a former Springfield mayor.

All three appointees are alumni of the University of Illinois. Holmes received both her bachelor of science and juris doctorate degrees from UIUC. Estrada, who currently serves as the first deputy commissioner in the Department of Family and Support Services for the city of Chicago, received his master of business admin-

istration from the University of Illinois at Chicago. Hasara received both her bachelor of science and master of arts degrees from the University of Illinois Springfield.

The appointments, pending Senate confirmation, run until 2017.

Meanwhile, the board in a mid-January meeting, re-elected **Christopher Kennedy**, president of Chicago's Merchandise Mart, as its president.

For updated news see the *Illinois Issues* website at <http://illinoisissues.uis.edu>

PEOPLE

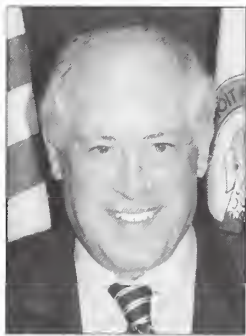
Foundation CEO

Carla Knorowski of Chicago, veteran of the nonprofit sector serving educational and cultural institutions, has been named the CEO of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Foundation, the not-for-profit organization that supports the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield.

"Carla has energy, wisdom and experience. As we proceed through the 150th anniversaries of Abraham Lincoln's presidency and the Civil War, we are looking to Carla for leadership and inspiration. We believe she is a wonderful match for our great mission," said Presidential Library Foundation Board Chairman **Wayne Whalen** in a prepared statement.

The CEO is responsible for the management, strategic planning and leadership of the foundation. Knorowski will oversee 11 staff members based in Springfield.

Quinn to lead association



Gov. Pat Quinn

Gov. **Pat Quinn** assumed the duties of chairman of the Midwestern Governors Association in January.

"I am honored to become chairman of the Midwestern Governors Association. The association

has a long history of governors who are committed to working together to improve our entire region, and I look forward to continuing that legacy," Quinn said in a prepared statement. "Now, more than ever, we need to band together to create sustained economic growth and success throughout the Midwest."

Quinn will serve as chairman through February of 2012.

The MGA is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that brings together the governors of 10 Midwestern states — Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin — to work cooperatively on public policy issues of significance to the region.

LETTERS

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Letters to the Editor

Illinois Issues

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On redistricting in Iowa

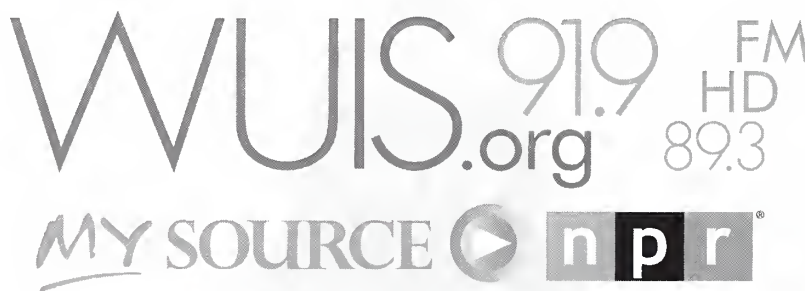
I have been reading the articles in *Illinois Issues* and other publications about how Illinois should redistrict its General Assembly. Many of them "point with pride" to Iowa's system. I don't think they understand what goes on in Iowa. Nor do most of them understand Illinois. (Full confession: I worked for the Illinois House during the 1971 redistricting and was a member of the commission tasked with devising a new system in the 1990s.)

Take a look at the Iowa constitution, the Iowa statutes and, most tellingly, the League of Women Voters of Iowa's description of the process over the last 30 years. It's definitely *not* a map drawn by

independent staffers and their computer. In practice, the Iowa system is much like the Pennsylvania system, in which the four legislative leaders choose a fifth person, an outsider, to be part of the decision-making process, a redistricting commission. Both Iowa and Pennsylvania do this up front, at the beginning. The deals are made by the five members of the commission. Check out the backgrounds of these "fifth members." I gather they are quite interesting. By the way, in 2001, the "fifth person" in Pennsylvania was a retired judge. Ahh, now *there* would be a way to keep politics out of redistricting in Illinois!

Ann Lousin, Chicago

Straight from the Statehouse bureau...



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Charles N. Wheeler III



Report calls into question state's level of friendliness to business

by Charles N. Wheeler III

Hoping to capitalize on negative reaction to the substantial income tax increase Gov. Pat Quinn signed in January, opportunistic politicians in other states launched high-profile efforts to lure business and jobs away from Illinois to their states.

- Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker slapped an "Open for Business" plaque onto the "Welcome to Wisconsin" sign that greets Illinois motorists as they cross the border at Beloit heading to Madison or the Dells.

- Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard appeared in full-page ads in several Illinois newspapers touting his city's "friendlier business climate."

- New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie flew here to woo business leaders to pull up stakes and head east. His timing could have been better, though: he arrived in Chicago the same day Quinn was in central Illinois, trumpeting a decision by Mitsubishi Motors to produce a new SUV crossover at the company's plant in Normal, assisted by \$29 million in state tax incentives. Back in Jersey, local media were not impressed. The (Newark) *Star Ledger* noted Christie picked up "one very solid lead" after meeting with about 18 business leaders and reported that several of the city's largest companies couldn't find time to hear his pitch.

So far, Christie and his fellow opportunists have triggered no mass exodus from the Prairie State — in part, perhaps, because tax rates are still higher in New Jersey than here, and the Garden State ranked dead last in the Tax Foundation's 2010 state business tax climate index.

Meanwhile, Illinois could brag about other coups besides Mitsubishi. Just in the two weeks following the tax increase, the state welcomed an aluminum extruding company from Wisconsin, a major scrap recycler from Missouri and a steel producer from Oregon. And a group of major Illinois exporters signed business deals worth \$1.8 billion with Chinese companies shortly before Chinese President Hu Jintao arrived in Chicago for a two-day visit in late January.

Still, no one would argue that the state's business climate is ideal; in fact, the widespread perception among economic development professionals is that the state "is no longer deemed conducive for business," wrote Illinois Chamber of Commerce President Doug Whitley in the foreword to the business group's Jobs Agenda, a comprehensive new report analyzing the state's weaknesses in attracting employers and prescribing specific steps toward growing jobs in Illinois. The 28-page report is available online at www.ilchamber.org.

The agenda is the product of a year-long effort by Whitley and Chamber staff, using surveys, focus groups, face-to-face interviews and other techniques, to get a sense of what state business leaders thought needed to be done to create jobs here.

The report reviews nine key areas, including such topics as economic development, environmental regulation, workforce preparation and transportation.

But the "most telling" finding of the extensive research, Whitley said, was the business community's belief that the first step to a better business climate was to fix the state's fiscal house.

"The business community is made up of people who are managers," he said. "It's frustrating to them that the politicians don't manage government. ... For all practical purposes, the ship of state has been without a captain for eight years, without a true, committed CEO-type manager. Now we have a new governor and a new General Assembly. Let's start over, let's chart a new course."

On the No. 1 agenda item, the report acknowledged that political leaders in recent months "have undertaken unprecedented steps to begin confronting the state's fiscal condition," including imposing higher income tax rates, restructuring the pension systems so that new hires must work longer for

fewer benefits and enacting cost-saving reforms in the Medicaid program.

"However, government leaders have not yet taken the hard votes to reduce expenditures and limit pensions," the report noted. Specifically, the Chamber calls for state leaders to commit to "an absolute reduction in year-over-year spending levels" and "an honest budget that matches spending and revenues." Business leaders also want pension and bond payments made and all bills paid in a timely manner, goals few would dispute.

Two other recommendations have drawn strong opposition from public employee unions and other workers' groups. But legislative leaders already are considering, and ultimately may approve, requiring current and retired public employees to pay more of their health care costs. Reducing future retirement benefits for current workers seems unlikely, though, given that many lawmakers, including Senate President John Cullerton, believe benefits are protected by the Illinois Constitution.

The Chamber's second highest priority is reducing the cost of doing business in Illinois, in particular through reforms to workers' compensation, the insurance program that replaces lost wages and covers medical costs for job-related injuries. Underscoring the urgency, the report noted that from 2006-2010, states nationwide averaged a 19 percent reduction in workers' compensation insurance rates, while Illinois experienced a 14 percent rate increase, according to an analysis by the Workers' Compensation Research Institute, an independent, not-for-profit research organization.

Major changes sought by the business community would require the workplace to be the primary cause of the injury, rather than a contributing factor; allow the employer to choose the physician who will treat the injured worker; reduce benefits for injuries involving use of alcohol or drugs; scale back the schedule of fees paid to doctors; provide additional training and merit review for the arbitrators who hear compensation cases; and beef up efforts to root out fraud.

Suggestions elsewhere include sharpening the focus of the state's lead economic development agency, streamlining the environmental permitting process and strengthening ties between business and education to match real-world skill needs with what is being taught in school.

Some agenda items, such as workers' comp reform, require legislation, but others — a commitment to balanced budgets, for example — need only the political will to change longstanding practices, or in the case of unresponsive bureaucrats, a clear message from the governor that efficiency and professionalism are to be the hallmarks of his administration.

The Jobs Agenda is not gospel, of course; other voices in the political arena will differ with its recommendations. But its underlying premise is solid: Policy makers need to find ways to create an environment conducive to job growth. □

Charles N. Wheeler III is director of the Public Affairs Reporting program at the University of Illinois Springfield.



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